

# 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Ideas about how you can improve your mental wellbeing



## **Mental Health and Wellbeing Self Help Guides**

This booklet is one of a series about mental health and wellbeing by Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service. Research and evidence back up everything in these booklets. The tools and tips work for people. You can find out which ones will help you.

The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are drawn from the Foresight's Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008). They drew on worldwide research to consider how to improve everyone's mental wellbeing. The Centre for Wellbeing at the New Economics Foundation developed 'five ways to wellbeing': a set of evidence-based actions to improve people's mental wellbeing.

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# What is mental wellbeing?

## **Feeling good and living life well**

Mental wellbeing means you feel good about yourself and the way you live your life. Most of the time you feel relaxed and useful, you can think clearly, solve problems well and make up your mind about things, you feel close to other people and look forward to the future. You're generally satisfied and content. You're ready to try new things too – you don't just sit back and let life pass you by. It means that you can usually deal with bad times and changes, and know when you need support from others.

## **Resilience**

Good mental wellbeing can help you to live a longer, happier and healthier life. When you face tough times you are able to cope. This is called having resilience. Building your mental wellbeing and being resilient can even reduce your risk of having poor mental health. Even if you are living with poor mental health or a diagnosed mental health problem, it is possible to have good mental wellbeing, to have strong resilience and to live well with the condition.

## **When times are bad**

If you generally have good mental wellbeing, you can cope with changes and bad times, or with illness better. Big life events such as the death of a loved one, divorce or losing your job can be tough to deal with. Even pleasant ones, like having a baby, moving home or getting a new job, can be hard to handle. Good mental wellbeing helps you to cope better with life's ups and downs.

## **What if you haven't got it?**

Don't blame yourself if you haven't got good mental wellbeing. But do try to do something about it. And do ask others for support to help you to improve your mental wellbeing. Use the tips in this booklet as a start.

## **This booklet can help**

This booklet aims to help you to think about what's good for your mental wellbeing and what will help you to make it even better.

# How you can raise your mental wellbeing

There is evidence that wellbeing is based on your situation in life; your relationships with others; the things that you do; the life skills you have; the things that have happened to you; and how resilient you are. These things affect how well you feel, and how well you deal with what life throws at you. They are hard to control or change, especially if you try to do this on your own without support.

However, there are ways to improve your mental wellbeing and increase feelings of happiness and fulfilment, and that you are getting the best out of your life.

It's not about things you **ought** to do. There is evidence that people with good mental wellbeing do more of certain activities. Research found that there are **5 ways** which help people to improve their mental wellbeing. These are simple things anyone can do to help themselves to feel better. It's about small steps, to build on what you may be doing anyway.

## The 5 Ways to Mental Wellbeing

Just as we can eat '5 a day' of fruit and vegetables to improve our physical health, there are 5 ways that we can use to improve our mental wellbeing. **The 5 ways are Be Active, Connect, Give, Keep Learning and Take Notice.** Find out more on the next few pages and for each of the 5 ways, fill in the boxes with what you do already and what new things you would like to try.



# Be Active

Go for a walk, or run, or cycle. Play a game or sport. Gardening and dancing are good exercise too. Find something that you enjoy and suits your level of mobility and fitness. It doesn't mean you have to try to run a marathon or go to the gym every day. Just 10 or 15 minutes of physical activity a day can make a difference to your mental wellbeing.

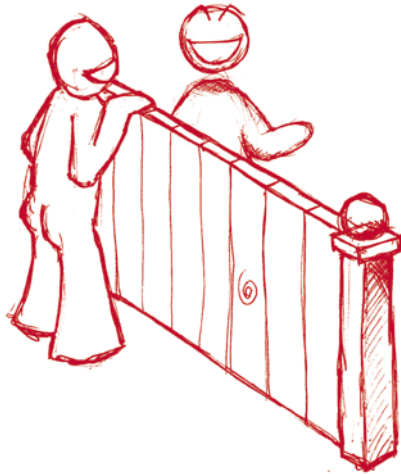
What do I do already?	What more would I like to do?



# Connect

Connect with people around you – family, friends, colleagues, neighbours – at home, work, school, your local community. If you've become a bit isolated, you may find it difficult to connect with people. You don't have to throw a big party. Try to build a better relationship with just a few people to start with. It is worth spending some time and effort to build up your connections.

What do I do already?	What more would I like to do?



# Give

Do something nice for someone – a friend or a stranger. Just thanking someone or giving them a smile can make you and them feel good. Volunteer your time for an organisation or local group. Give yourself some time and treats as well. Some people find giving easy, but don't find it so easy to receive – whether gifts or compliments. If you know it makes you feel good to give, then when you accept something you know it's good for the person who's giving to you too.

What do I do already?	What more would I like to do?





# Keep Learning

Try something new or pick up an old interest. Do a formal course to learn new information or a skill, to learn to play a musical instrument, or to draw and paint. Learning can be hard if it's something you have to do and it feels like a chore. You may have had a poor experience of formal learning, at school or college. So think about more informal ways of learning. You could ask someone to show you how to cook their favourite food or how to fix a bicycle. You can learn from reading, listening to the radio or watching television. What's going on locally that may be interesting to visit or take part in?

What do I do already?	What more would I like to do?



# Take Notice

Be curious about what's around you and about people. Notice the changing seasons – trees and plants. Think about how you can be creative. Be aware of your feelings and reflect on your experiences. To take notice is to be in the present, in the 'here and now', and to be aware and mindful of your surroundings, to be alert to what is happening around you. It can mean pausing, even for a brief period, to spend some time in silence and reflect on your experiences.

What do I do already?	What more would I like to do?



# Putting it in to Practice

All of these can be free and easy to do – and you can link them together, such as going for a walk with a friend, helping an elderly neighbour to do their shopping, learning to ride a bicycle, going to a talk at the local museum or art gallery.

By being aware of all the small steps you are taking, you can build the 5 ways to mental wellbeing into a healthier lifestyle for yourself.

As you develop your strengths and resources you will also be more resilient and be more able to deal with challenges when they arise.

When we decide to change our behaviour or learn new skills, we need to put them into practice and make conscious attempts to keep doing them regularly. If we don't make the effort, it's easy to slip back into old unhealthy ways. So, start with things which are easy for you to do.

Do a bit more of things you are doing already. Try things out that you enjoy, and notice the difference.

Then check which of the 5 ways to mental wellbeing you're doing least of. That will help you to focus on what you can do more of to gain a better balance.

If you find some of the 5 ways difficult, you might want to talk to a friend or an 'expert' in that area to get ideas of what you could do and how.

# Making a Plan

When you've thought about each of the 5 ways, it might help you if you make a plan.

## 1. What am I going to do first?

## 2. When will I do it?

## 3. What might stop me from doing it, and I will I overcome this?

If you don't manage to do what you plan, don't be hard on yourself. Try something else, until you find what suits you.

## 4. Is what I plan to do:

Useful for understanding or changing what I do? **Yes No**

Specific, so that I will know that I've done it? **Yes No**

Realistic, practical and achievable? **Yes No**

# Questions to help you think about what you're doing

And then you could think about the following questions:

**1. How could using the '5 ways' have a positive impact in my personal and professional life?**

**2. What will prompt me to use each of the 5 ways?**

**3. Is there anyone I'd like to ask to support me in this or share this with?**

# Other sources of help

Find out what activities are going on in your area. **Your local library** is a great place to start.

## Websites

### **[www.mhim.org.uk](http://www.mhim.org.uk)**

This is the 'Mental Health in Manchester' website. It has information about mental health issues. There are details of local services.

### **[www.fivewaystowellbeing.org](http://www.fivewaystowellbeing.org)**

More information from the New economics Foundation.

### **[Manchester.fsd.org.uk](http://Manchester.fsd.org.uk)**

Help and Support in Manchester

### **[www.cci.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au)**

This website features free online self-help modules and resources.

### **[ecouch.anu.edu.au](http://ecouch.anu.edu.au)**

E-couch is a free self-help interactive website. It covers a range of topics. These include modules for depression, anxiety and worry.

### **[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)**

This website offers free Cognitive Behavioural Therapy self-help information, resources and including therapy worksheets.

### **[www.llttf.com](http://www.llttf.com)**

The 'Living Life to the Full' website. This is a free, online life skills course. It covers a range of skills that help deal with everyday stresses.

### **[moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://moodgym.anu.edu.au)**

Mood Gym is a free self-help website. It covers a range of skills to help prevent and deal with depression.

### **[www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)**

The online mental health resource from the Royal College of Psychiatrists

# Notes

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