

Invest in your Mental Health

Factsheet

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1 in 4 people experience mental illness every year.

To cope with the stresses life can throw at us and overcome daily challenges, it's important to stay as mentally well as possible. Good mental health can help us overcome problems, build healthy relationships and work more productively.

Improve your mental health every day with small steps. Bring out your best self and invest in your mental health.



Mindfulness for mental health

Being mindful is a way of paying attention to the present moment. It uses techniques like meditation, breathing and yoga to help us become more aware of our thoughts and feelings. Instead of being overpowered by them, it can help us manage them better.

Mindfulness can help ease stress, anxiety and depression and can be learnt and practiced at any age. It can also be used if you simply want to improve your mental health and wellbeing.

Mindful eating and drinking. Pay attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat and drink. When drinking a cup of tea or coffee, you could focus on how hot the liquid it feels on your tongue, how sweet it tastes or watch the steam that it gives off.

Mindful moving, walking or running. Notice the feeling of your body moving. You may notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures and the different smells around you.

Body scan. Move your attention slowly through different parts of the body, starting from the top of your head moving all the way down to the end of your toes. Focus on the feelings of warmth, tension, tingling or relaxation of different parts of your body.

Mindful colouring and drawing. Focus on the colours and the sensation of your pencil against the paper, rather than trying to draw something in particular. You could use a mindfulness colouring book or download mindfulness colouring images.

Mindful meditation and yoga. Sit quietly and focus on your breathing, your thoughts, sensations in your body and the things you can hear around you. Try to bring your focus back to the present if your mind starts to wander.

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Overcoming overwhelm

Your to do list is a mile long, your mind is full to bursting and you can't concentrate. Sound familiar? A common feeling for many, but with this year's pandemic and months of a slower way of life, the busier routines can bring feelings of overwhelm and not knowing where to start. Lose that mental overload and put yourself back in control.

Breathe. When we're stressed, our bodies go into flight or fight mode. Take some deep breaths, feel your body start to relax. Think about where you need to start.

Make a list of all the things making you feel overwhelmed. Get everything you need to remember out of your head and onto paper.

Eliminate. Now you have things brain-dumped on paper, certain things will seem less urgent or impactful. Get rid of any that you no longer see as important.

Prioritise. Think of actions and small steps to achieve long term goals. Plan those small steps into your days.

Schedule in your calendar. Plan realistic times to get tasks done. If there's too much to do one day, put them on a different day instead.

Pause. Breathe. Smile.

Invest in relationships

Good relationships protect our mental health and wellbeing at any stage of life. People who are more socially connected are happier, physically healthier and live longer.

Loneliness can be toxic to our wellbeing. Our health declines earlier and we can have shorter lifespans. Create better relationships with yourself, the people you're close to and those around you.

Give time. Put more time aside to connect with friends and family.

Be present. It can be tempting to check your phone, social media or even work emails when with family and friends. Try to be present in the moment and be there for your loved ones, and switch out of work mode wherever possible.

Listen. Actively listen to what others are saying in a non-judgemental way and concentrate on their needs in that moment.

Be listened to. Share how you're feeling, honestly, and allow yourself to be listened to and supported.

Recognise unhealthy relationships. Being around positive people can make us happier, but our wellbeing can be negatively affected by harmful relationships. Acknowledging this can help us move forward.

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Invest in yourself

Caring for yourself isn't self-indulgence, it's self-preservation. Self-care is about looking after yourself and your mental health. The relationship you have with yourself is crucial to your own wellbeing and creating healthy and happy relationships with others. Being kind to yourself regularly is one of the best things you can do for yourself.

Self-care can be different for everyone. For some, it might be taking time to rest each week, for others, it might be sweating it out at the gym or going for a run outside. It could be going for a walk and spending time in nature, or seeing friends regularly (with social distancing in place). Bring a positive change to improving the relationship you have with yourself and start some positive habits.

- Enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Don't smoke, reduce alcohol consumption, get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly and eat a healthy balanced diet
- Spend 15–30 minutes each day doing something that uplifts you
- When your inner critic or an outer critic finds faults, try and find truth and exception to what's being said
- If you stumble or feel you've failed, don't beat yourself up. Act as if you were your own best friend. Be kind and supportive
- Do something to wind down at the end of each day
- Take a few minutes each day to appreciate yourself
- Make a list of those things you are grateful for each day - no matter how small

The relationship you have with yourself sets the tone for every other relationship you have.



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Money and mental health

Poor mental health can make earning and managing money harder. And worrying about money can make your mental health worse. It can start to feel like a vicious cycle.

Sorting things out might feel like an immense task. And lots of things may be out of your control. But try taking things one step at a time.

Understand your mood patters. Think about when you spend or save money and why. Keep a diary of your spending and your mood.

Organise your finances. Create realistic budgets, manage your debts and keep all important documents in one place.

Avoid overspending when you're unwell. Try giving your cards to someone else or find ways to delay purchasing.

Share your worries. Talk to a trusted friend or family member.

Look after your wellbeing. Your body and mind are connected in many ways. Improving any area of your life can help you cope with challenges in others.

You are the best investment you'll ever make.



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