

Five ways to improve mental wellbeing

1. Connect

Good relationships are important. This includes relationships with our family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Take time to invest in these relationships as the evidence suggests that those who have strong connections with those around them are happier. Simple steps can help. For example:

- Make time to spend with your family. Switch off the TV and play a game or talk
- Arrange a day out with friends
- Speak to someone new
- Volunteer to help in your community

2. Be active

Evidence repeatedly tells us that physical activity is linked to mental wellbeing. Ideally, adults should do two and a half hours of moderate-intensity exercise each week.

3. Give to others

Give to others in big or small ways. Helping others and working towards a shared goal can stimulate the reward areas in the brain and help generate positive feelings. Studies have shown that small acts of kindness are also associated with an improved sense of wellbeing.

Giving can include offering a hand to someone you see struggling in the street with bags or a pushchair, phoning someone you know who needs support or company and even just thanking someone for something they have done for you.

4. Keep Learning

Continuing to learn throughout adult life has been associated with improved mental wellbeing. It can improve self-confidence, self-esteem and maintain a sense of hope and purpose. It can even instil a greater ability to cope with stress.

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It doesn't have to be in the context of a formal course or class, although of course these are great ways to learn new things and connect with people around you. Simple suggestions include:

- Learn to cook something new at home
- Visit a gallery or museum
- Check out the courses in your local area
- Take up a new hobby or pick up an old one.

Find out the learning and development opportunities available in the workplace – take a look at Marlborough Academy courses and workshops.

5. Take Notice

Mindfulness can improve mental wellbeing. Take time to connect with all your senses, notice how the world around you looks, feels, sounds, smells and tastes. This isn't about changing the world around you but helping you to see the present more clearly.

As we start to improve our awareness of the present, we can start to train ourselves to notice patterns and recognise thoughts for what they are, 'mental events' that do not have to control us.

Mindfulness can be done anywhere but studies have shown that when used as part of meditation, Yoga and Tai Chi, can aid stress reduction and improve mood.