

Take care of your wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is just as important as physical wellbeing, and maintaining both is an important part of staying fit and healthy.

Keep physically active

Doing regular exercise can be very effective in lifting your mood and increasing your energy levels. It doesn't have to be very strenuous or sporty to be effective – the important thing is to pick something you enjoy doing, so you're more likely to stick with it.



Identify mood triggers

Keeping track of your moods in a mood diary can help you work out what affects your mental wellbeing and recognise changes in your mood that would be difficult to spot otherwise. For example, you may realise that seeing a certain person has an effect on your mood.

Knowing what affects your moods can help you take steps to avoid these situations or mitigate against the negative impact a certain situation may have on you.

Sleep

There is a close relationship between sleep and mental health. If you're finding it difficult to sleep – don't try to force sleep, get up, go to another room and try to relax there. Do something soothing, such as listening to music, until you're tired enough to go back to bed. If you are awake for long periods, repeat this process as many times as you need to.

Relax

It is important to make time for yourself and relax. In order to look after others you need to first care for yourself. Self-care is not self-indulgent, it's essential. Do something you like, or even just take a five-minute break to look out of the window.

Learning a relaxation technique, such as yoga, meditation or mindfulness can also help you relax and reduce stress levels.

Diet

Explore the relationship between the food you eat and your mood. Improving your diet can help give you positive feelings, clearer thinking, more energy and calmer moods.

Think about how regularly you eat, if your blood sugar drops you might feel tired, irritable and experience low mood. You need to eat regularly to keep your sugar level steady, and choose foods that release energy slowly like protein, nuts and seeds, oats and wholegrains.

Are you having too much caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant. Having too much can make you feel anxious and experience low mood, disturb your sleep, or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly. Caffeine is in: tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and other manufactured energy drinks. You might feel noticeably better quite quickly if you drink less caffeine or avoid it altogether.



Build and maintain constructive relationships

Building and maintaining constructive relationships with people is an important part of staying mentally well. If you spend time around positive and supportive people, you are more likely to have a better self-image, be more confident and feel able to face difficult times.

In return, if you are caring and supportive to other people, you are more likely to get a positive response from them. This is particularly important if working alone is a significant part of your job.



Do something you enjoy

Doing something you enjoy can improve your confidence and help you stay well. Make time to do things you like, whether it's cooking, seeing your friends or doing DIY. Some people find that doing something creative, such as drama, drawing or sewing, helps them to express themselves positively and deal with any difficult emotions in a positive way.

Learning something new, or taking up a new hobby, can also boost your confidence and occupies your mind in a positive and active way. If you want to try a new hobby, think about what you are good at, or things that you have always wanted to try. You can find information about volunteering organisations and local groups, clubs or classes at your local library, in local newspapers or magazines, or online.

Talk about the way you feel

If you are facing a difficult time, talking about the way you feel with someone you know and trust can often help. At first this may be hard because, when you're going through a difficult time in your life, your immediate response might be to keep your feelings to yourself rather than share them with others.

However, the best thing you can do to build resilience is to talk to someone about the way you feel. Your colleagues, friends or family may be able to offer you practical help or advice and give you another perspective on what is causing your problems. Even if they can't help, often just talking something through and feeling that there is someone to listen and understand you can make you feel much better.



Set yourself a challenge

Set yourself a challenge that you can realistically achieve. This doesn't have to be anything particularly large but should have meaning for you. For example, you might decide you are going to write a letter to your local paper or start going to a regular exercise class.

You will feel satisfied and proud of yourself when you achieve your goal, and feel more positive about yourself as a result.

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