

Chest
Heart &
Stroke
Scotland



MENTAL WELLBEING



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

This Essential Guide is about mental wellbeing.

It explains:

- the importance of taking care of how you feel
- how to look after your mental wellbeing
- how to recognise when you might need some extra help.

What is good mental wellbeing?

Your mental wellbeing is all about how you feel and how you cope with everyday life.

Good mental wellbeing means you:



feel good about yourself most of the time



have good relationships with others



feel able to cope with everyday life



are able to manage your feelings and enjoy things.

Good mental wellbeing has lots of benefits.
These include:



better physical
health



a healthier
lifestyle



better relationships
with family and
friends



better recovery
from or ability to
cope with illness.

There are lots of things you can do to help with your mental wellbeing...

Spend time with others

Having **good relationships** with family and friends is important for your mental wellbeing.

Make time to speak to the people you love. This could be face-to-face, over the phone or even over text.

If you don't know many people, think about joining a local activity group. For example, a book club, an art class or a walking group.

If you have a long-term health condition, meeting others and sharing experiences can make a huge difference.

Speak to the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line nurses to find out about support groups in your area.

Get out and about



Getting out of the house, going for a walk or meeting a friend for coffee is good for your mental wellbeing. Think about things you enjoy doing and plan to do some of them each week.



Exercise is also a great way to help improve your mood. Try to do as much physical activity as you can. Not only will this help you to feel good, but it is also good for your physical health too.



Choose activities you enjoy doing like walking, gardening, swimming, dancing or yoga.

Get enough sleep

Getting enough sleep can help to improve your mood, help with stress and improve your concentration.

Tips for getting a good sleep include:



relaxing before bed by having a bath, reading a book or listening to the radio



being 'screen free' for at least 1 hour before bed – no TV, phone or computer



going to bed at the same time every night



making sure your bedroom is quiet, dark and not too hot or too cold.

Avoid alcohol

Some people use alcohol to help them relax and improve their mood. However, because of the way alcohol affects your brain, alcohol is actually a depressant. This means that it can make you feel anxious, angry, low or sad. The more you drink, the higher the risk of feeling these negative emotions.

If you are feeling low or stressed, try to avoid drinking alcohol.

If you think you may be drinking too much and need some support or advice, there is help available. Speak to your doctor, go to **www.drinkaware.co.uk** or call Drinkline on **0300 123 1110** for free, confidential advice.



Be mindful

Being more aware of the 'here and now' is sometimes called **mindfulness**.



Mindfulness is about focusing on the **present moment** instead of thinking about the past or the future.



It is about being aware of your **thoughts and emotions**, how your body feels and what is happening around you.

Anyone can practice mindfulness and the more you try, the better you will get at it.

There are lots of books and websites on mindfulness. Look online or check your local library. Smartphone apps like Headspace are also a great way to get started.

Volunteer and give to others

Volunteering can help with your mental wellbeing by knowing you are doing something helpful and good. Volunteering can also increase your confidence and your contact with others.

There are many different ways you can volunteer, even if you do not have a lot of spare time.

Doing something for others, even just something small like giving a compliment or saying thank you, can also make you feel good about yourself.

Doing little things each day can really add up and make a big difference to your mental wellbeing.



What if your mental wellbeing is not so good?

It is normal for people to feel stressed, low or sad sometimes. However, feeling like this a lot of the time can start affecting your mood each day. It can also affect how well you feel you are able to cope with life in general.

Your mental wellbeing can be affected by lots of things. For example, if you are ill or worrying about your health, if you are having relationship problems or problems at work, or if you feel lonely. At other times you might not know the reason for not feeling OK.

Signs to look out for...

- feeling unhappy and low in mood a lot of the time
- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- losing interest in other people or daily activities
- feeling hopeless or lost
- often feeling like you are tired or have no energy
- finding it hard to concentrate on everyday things
- having trouble sleeping
- feeling guilty or worthless
- having little self-confidence or self-worth (generally feeling bad about yourself).



Getting help

Asking for help can be hard but the good news is that there is lots of support available.

Telling someone how you are feeling

Telling someone how you are feeling is an important step to feeling much better.

You may choose to speak to a friend or family member. Your doctor is also an important person to speak to. They may recommend some treatment options. These may include lifestyle changes, medication or talking therapies.

There are also organisations that have people to talk to, for free, about how you are feeling. For example, you could contact **Samaritans** (www.samaritans.org, tel: 116 123) or **Breathing Space** (www.breathingspace.scot, tel: 0800 838 587).

Medication

If you have been feeling low for some time, you may be suffering from depression. For some people medication can improve their symptoms and help them to cope better with life while they are feeling low.

Your doctor may prescribe antidepressants to help you. They will discuss the different options with you to find what suits you best.



Talking therapies

Sometimes it can help to talk to someone who has been specially trained to help people with how they are thinking, feeling and behaving.

You may be referred to someone in the NHS. You can also find a private therapist, although they can be expensive.

Some areas have services that offer free talking therapies, such as counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). You can ask your doctor or nurse about these and other courses that may be available to help you develop skills to manage everyday living.



Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to www.chss.org.uk/publications for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: adviceline@chss.org.uk.

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to www.chss.org.uk/supportus to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.

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NO LIFE HALF LIVED

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