

Take5

steps to wellbeing

Connect



Keep learning



Be active



Take notice



Give



Health and
Social Care

Take5

steps to wellbeing

There are lots of ways that you can look after your wellbeing. Different things work for different people, but there are some basic things we can all try.

Evidence suggests there are five steps you can take to improve and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help us feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

The Take 5 steps to wellbeing are:



Take 5 activities can be done by everyone. Try and build them into your everyday life. You are probably already doing some of them anyway.

Connect



Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you build a sense of belonging and self-worth;
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences;
- give you an opportunity to share your concerns;
- provide emotional support, and allow you to support others.

There are lots of things you can try to help you connect with others.

- Make some time in your week to be with your family and/or friends.
- Try switching off the TV or putting away your phone to talk to others.
- Join a group about something that interests you, whether that's cars, cooking or crocheting.
- Check out your nearest church or community centre to see what group activities they offer. Community newsletters are often a great source of information on opportunities to connect.

Get connecting

- Men's Sheds are a great way for men to connect. A men's shed is a community-based project, where men can come together to learn, share skills and make long-lasting friendships. For more, visit www.menssheds.ie
- Support groups provide invaluable spaces for members to come together to share

experiences, speak openly about challenges and share information. Lots of services and support groups are listed on

www.familysupportni.gov.uk

- Age NI runs a 'Check in and chat' telephone service for anyone over 60 in Northern Ireland. If you are interested in learning more about the service, call Age NI Advice on **0808 808 7575** or email info@ageni.org



Keep learning

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem;
- helping you to build a sense of purpose;
- helping you to connect with others.

There are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life. If you'd like to learn something new, you could try some of these ideas.

- Not a whizz in the kitchen, but want to eat better? Learn to cook something new.

- Take on a new responsibility at work, such as joining a staff group or signing up to a training session to improve your skills.
- Work on a DIY project, such as fixing up your garden or decorating a room. There are plenty of free video tutorials online.
- Consider signing up for a course. You could try learning a practical skill like sewing or sign up for a course to improve your job prospects.
- Find a hobby and throw yourself into it.

Get learning

- To learn how to cook new recipes, visit www.choosetolivebetter.com
- Check out what courses are on offer in your local community centre or further education college.

- Visit your local library to borrow some books or get free eBook access from www.librariesni.org.uk
- BBC Bitesize offers resources and activities galore to help with home learning for children and adults - www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/learn



Be active

Being active is great for your physical and mental health. Try these simple steps to move more.

Get into a good habit. Set a reminder to get up and move every 30 minutes during the day.

Leave for lunch. Lunchtime is a good opportunity to fit in some activity. If you are working during the day, try to get out for a walk and if you are working from home, try to fit in a workout.

Your own stand-up routine. Try standing when you can – even short periods of standing will add up and improve strength.

Take up a hobby. There are lots of physical hobbies you can try,

like walking, running, dancing or swimming. Find one you enjoy and make it part of your life.

It's better together. If your friends and family want to be more active too, try engaging everyone's competitive side with activity challenges.

Go from strength to strength. There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles. Examples include yoga, doing body weight exercises, such as push-ups and sit-ups, and routine activities like carrying heavy shopping bags and heavy gardening.

Track your progress

Tracking apps can help you track your activity and set goals, but even just a checklist on paper will do.

Getting active

- For more on getting active, see www.choosetolivebetter.com
- Your local council website is a great place to find walking routes. There are also a number of Walking for Health Groups across Northern Ireland. Search 'walking

for health' on NI Direct for contact details in your local Trust area – www.nidirect.gov.uk

- For sitting exercises, fitness advice for wheelchair users, physical activity guidelines for children, home exercise videos and much more, visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise

Take notice



Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness mindfulness. Mindfulness can help us enjoy life more and understand ourselves better. You can take simple steps to develop it in your own life.

Notice the everyday. Notice the small things, like the birds singing in the trees.

Keep it regular. Reminding yourself to take notice is the first step to mindfulness. It can be helpful to pick a regular time during which you

decide to take notice of the world around you.

Try something new. Trying new things, like going somewhere new, can also help you notice the world in a new way.

Watch your thoughts. Lots of us find it difficult to control thoughts and worries. With practice though, it is possible to learn to observe rather than identify with the content of thoughts and feelings.

Free yourself from the past and the future. Try and take a mindful approach if you start reliving the past or worrying about the future.

Get noticing

- If you'd like to learn more about the practice of mindfulness, there are lots of apps available. Search this app library to find one that suits your needs - apps4healthcareni.hscni.net

- Connect to nature on your doorstep and contribute to its protection with the Conservation Volunteers – www.tcv.org.uk
- Visit parks and nature attractions. Check out your local council website for information on what's near to you.

Give



Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward;
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth;
- helping you connect with other people.

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

You could try some of these ideas.

- Volunteer in your local community.

- Say thank you to someone for something they have done for you.
- Give a smile, a compliment, encouragement.
- Ask friends, family, colleagues or neighbours how they are and really listen to their answer.
- Offer to help someone you know, like an older neighbour. While it's not always easy to know how to help, a good start is simply to stop and talk if you pass them on the street. You could then follow that up with the offer of practical help.

Get giving

- Donate items or volunteer your time at a foodbank. Visit www.trusselltrust.org for opportunities local to you.
- Get involved in a befriending scheme. For more information on befriending, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mentoring-and-befriending-volunteer

- Volunteering is a great way to give to others. Register with www.volunteernow.co.uk and search for opportunities in your area.
- Consider donating blood. Visit the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service website to learn more – www.nibts.hscni.net

What Take 5 activities will you do?

Choose activities you will enjoy and that can fit into your everyday life. One activity can count towards more than one step. For example, going for a walk with a friend could count towards connecting, being active and taking notice.

Boosting wellbeing requires consistency and setting SMART goals can help with that.

SMART goals are:

- **Specific:** for example, 'walk' rather than 'get fit'.

- **Measurable:** for example, for 30 minutes, three times a week.
- **Achievable:** start small and set goals within your reach.
- **Relevant:** choose changes that make sense for you.
- **Timely:** set a start date, such as after lunch every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, starting this week.

For further information and local services that offer help and support on a range of issues which can affect mental health and wellbeing, visit www.mindingyourhead.info

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