



# 5 Ways To Wellbeing

**The Five Ways to Wellbeing** are evidence-based strategies to promote physical and mental wellbeing. You can think of them as the foundations for feeling good and functioning effectively. Research conducted by hundreds of psychologists, psychiatrists, neuroscientists and educators have distilled wellbeing down to five simple steps:

- **Connect**
- **Be active**
- **Take notice**
- **Keep learning**
- **Give**

## CONNECT

The quality of your relationships with family, friends and work colleagues impacts on your happiness. Humans have evolved as social beings that need connection to thrive and survive.

A recent study has identified social connection as the strongest protective factor for depression:

*"Active social connection is the strongest protective factor for depression, a new study reports. Additionally, reducing sedentary activities such as watching TV or taking a nap can also help lower depression risk."*

(<https://neurosciencenews.com/social-connection-depression-16834/>)

## BE ACTIVE

Physical exercise is well documented to improve health by increasing energy and feel good chemicals (endorphins). Just 20 minutes of daily exercise can improve your mood and increase resilience to manage stress. It will also help you sleep better. You can choose low impact activities like walking, yoga or gardening. It is important to find something you enjoy and do it regularly.

## TAKE NOTICE

Mindfulness is about present moment awareness. Being fully present means not being 'in your head' with worries and thoughts about the past or future. Practicing mindfulness regularly can improve focus and concentration. It can also improve decision-making and memory whilst your body and mind are in a calm mode of operation.

Strategies to cultivate include gratitude, which focuses on what is already good in your life and mindful breathing, which connects you back to your body.

## KEEP LEARNING

Life is a journey of ongoing change. Your ability to cope with changing circumstances is enhanced when you are open to new growth opportunities, even if they feel a little uncomfortable at first. By setting goals you can gently stretch your comfort zone and have some fun along the way. Learning builds confidence and gives you a sense of achievement. When you try something new you are building new neural pathways to help reduce the cognitive decline associated with ageing.

## GIVE

When you give your time and energy through volunteering or acts of kindness your wellbeing improves. Helping others gives you a sense of purpose and belonging.

*"Volunteering is associated with diminished depressive symptoms and enhanced feelings of happiness, self-worth, mastery and personal control – 'a helper's high.'"*

(Sonja Lyubomirsky, 'The How of Happiness')

The five pillars of wellbeing have been broken down into small actionable behaviours you can incorporate into your daily life. It starts with setting a conscious intention to take control and responsibility of *what you can* with respect to your own health and happiness.



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