

## Look after your body and your brain

*Looking after your body with physical activity, good food and sleep will also help you look after your brain.*

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Try taking one of these steps:

- go out in nature, listen to the sounds of nature and smell the fresh air
- get out and do something physical, like going for a run, walk or to yoga
- get your hands dirty in the garden
- sleep in your bed (and not in front of the television)
- keep a bottle of water in your car or handbag
- cut back on alcohol and recreational drugs
- eat healthier meals.

How does this help? Since childhood, we've all been told to think about what we put in our bodies and what we do to them. It's with good reason. Keeping **physically active, eating right, sleeping well** do make a difference to our mental health.

## Take some of the stress out of life

*Depression and anxiety can make it hard for you to deal with everyday situations. By using some of these strategies you can take some of the stress out of your life.*

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Choose one of these steps:

- get back into your daily routine, by doing little things like, showering, making your bed, hanging the washing out. Choose one thing to start with.
- postpone major life changes such as moving or changing jobs until you're feeling better
- help someone else who needs support
- remember to take holidays from work and get away from your everyday life
- learn to relax. Try yoga, meditation, muscle relaxation or a breathing technique
- download a **mindfulness app**, a range of them can be found **here** on the Mental Health Foundation website

- find a counselor you can trust and work through issues you're facing.

Taking care of your mental or emotional health is important. Your mental health won't always take care of itself, especially in the stressful times.

Being strong mentally means you're better prepared for life's challenges. There are many ways we can protect our mental and emotional health as we go about each day. These same strategies can help prevent mental distress from developing in the future. It might take time for the positive feelings to return, but keep at it. Things will get better!

## Connect with friends

*Connecting with people can help you feel better faster and stay well for longer. Try some of these ideas if you haven't been keeping in touch with friends for a while.*

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Find one of these occasions to get in touch:

- meet up with friends for a coffee (virtual for right now)
- help out at the local community agency
- spend more time with the children or grandchildren. You might like to stay around to watch them play or have a casual chat with any other adults who are there. Facebook some friends you haven't caught up with in a while
- make a meal with a friend
- go for a walk or a swim with friends
- join online forums or chat groups
- get help from a friend or counselor to begin to work out any difficult relationships.

We know that when people are feeling low and anxious, they often withdraw from their friends. It's a natural response but actually, strong connections can help you get well faster and help you stay well for longer.

Your your community can be your strength, providing a strong sense of belonging and support. Getting involved, spending time with them, and even doing things for them can give you a feeling of purpose and wellbeing.



It's good to get out in public, even if it's just down to the shops or to a sports match. If you're getting together with people, keep the visits short if that makes it easier. You don't have to talk about the way you're feeling.

It might help to plan your outings. Decide what you're going to do and write down when you'll do it. This makes it easier to ignore those negative feelings that stop you going at the last minute.