



**“5 Ways to Wellbeing” – Staying Mentally
Well During The
COVID-19 Pandemic**



This booklet is designed to help people to take control and action towards a mentally healthier life. The “Five Ways to Wellbeing” are basic principles that anyone can use, they have been fully researched and proven to have a positive impact on day to day emotional wellbeing. There is no rocket science here and perhaps no surprises in these basic ideas but research shows that making small changes in these 5 areas can have a big impact on mental wellbeing.

During these challenging times we currently face owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures, our lives have changed beyond recognition. Our work and social networks have been transformed and diminished which will inevitably over time have a detrimental impact on our mental health if we do not take action to counteract this.

This workbook is designed to guide you through each of the 5 areas and encourage you to think about what they mean to you and how you can incorporate them in your daily life in the coming weeks and months to support your wellbeing. There are questions at the end of each section to encourage you to think about how each of the 5 ways relates to you personally. It’s important that you find choices and activities that are meaningful for you. You do not need to share your answers with anybody but discussing your ideas with family or friends can be really beneficial and help with your wellbeing.



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What can you do to take simple but reliable steps towards mental wellbeing?

Everybody faces challenges at some time in life but what each of us finds challenging and how we cope is a very individual thing. One thing for sure, is that even the most resilient and the healthiest amongst us is going to find the current lockdown measures challenging in times. We are juggling competing priorities between home schooling and work, worrying about financial pressures and potential job loss, we are no doubt feeling cut off from our friends, colleagues and families and may have times of great anxiety about the prospect of actually catching the COVID-19 virus.

This booklet is about taking control of this stressful situation in small but proven ways to help us to cope more effectively while we are facing these challenges. By following these five ways to wellbeing and incorporating small but significant changes into our lives there is a body of evidence that proves these actions are linked to increased happiness and life satisfaction.

Simply put it's about making effective choices and taking control of the small things that we can change. Often, we do



not consider the choices we make as we spend much of our life on autopilot. Consider the following scenarios:

- Somebody pays you a compliment:
 - You can accept it and feel good or
 - Feel uncomfortable and ignore it or disagree
- Somebody shouts at you:
 - You can shout back and get annoyed
 - You can remain calm and forgive them

It's not the situation that dictates our emotions but rather the choices we make and how we respond. The 5 ways to wellbeing are about recognising the choices we have and how we can make deliberate and conscious decisions in any situation to enable us to feel better.



What are the 5 Ways?

1. Connect

Really connecting with people around you – friends, family, work colleagues, neighbours, community

2. Keep Learning

Try something new or reignite an old interest. Set a challenge that you will enjoy achieving. Learning things can be fun and increases confidence.

3. Be Active

Any kind of exercise and activity that gets us moving is beneficial. It's important to find an activity that you will enjoy and that suits your level of ability and fitness.

4. Take Notice

Take time to focus on details, be curious, notice the sunshine, nature and the world around you. Be aware, reflecting on your experiences helps you to appreciate what's important to you.

5. Give

Do something nice for someone you know or a random act of kindness for someone you don't. Volunteer your time or join a community group.



1. Connect

When we think about connecting, we immediately think about doing so with other people. And while this is important there a number of other ways in which we can connect:

- Connect with ourselves – quiet time
- Connect with nature and pets
- Connect with God or spirituality

It's also important to consider what kind of connections we don't want. If we are spending too much time connecting with our own or other people's distress this can become detrimental and requires a balance. If you find that you spend much of your time connected to but caring for others it is important to gain some perspective and dedicate some time to connecting with your own needs.

Of course, connecting with loved ones is also important. During lockdown o many of us are cut off from our family and friends. It is important to maintain contact in whichever way we can to harness the positive benefits from these relationships. People are turning to technology and using video conferencing, houseparty software and social media more than ever to be able to stay connected. The choices are endless so don't be afraid, give it a go.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- What is the difference between connecting and just making contact?

2

- What connections would you like more of?
- What connections would you like less of?

3

- What connections would you like to make or remake?



2. Keep Learning

A lifestyle that includes valuing learning is positively related to mental health and wellbeing.

It is hard to maintain motivation for learning, specifically if we find it difficult or if we are constantly told at work that we have to complete learning whether we want to or are interested or not. If this is the case it can become more of a chore than a pleasure.

However, there is a difference between saying “I have to...” and “I want to...”. Learning new skills and refining old ones is important to both personal and professional growth. If you have recently found yourself spending time at home and having more spare time than usual, this is a perfect opportunity to learn something that you have always wanted to do, whether it is how to play an instrument, speak a foreign language, bake some new recipes or work towards a career change. Whatever you decide to do it is about doing it for you and valuing the opportunity in order to gain satisfaction and wellbeing.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- What do I think about learning? What would I like to learn each day?

2

- What am I interested in? What do I value? What would be useful? What would I enjoy?

3

- What do I need to make learning fun and enjoyable?



3. Be Active

It's not news that being active is beneficial to both our physical and mental health. Small changes in physical activity can make quite big differences. Just 10 minutes of regular activity has been shown to benefit mental health.

We need to make more of a conscious effort to become more physically active. Especially at the moment when our usual routine has disappeared and we are confined to our homes. It really comes down to choice and making sure that you prioritise this in your day. Schedule some small pockets of time to engage in activity that suits you. It should not feel like a chore but instead should feel like something you look forward to. The key is in choosing the right activity for your ability and interests.

We may sometimes feel like we are exhausted, especially after a mentally demanding day. But mental fatigue can be overcome by keeping on top of our physical health. The easiest way to maintain this is to build a routine. Engaging in regular activity, helps not only our bodies to feel good, but also keeps our mind feeling refreshed and ready to face challenges.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- What activities do I engage in on a regular basis? How would I like to develop this?

2

- Who can support me to be more active? How can we do this together?

3

- Are there any small adjustments I can make to my life to help me to be more active?



4. Take Notice

Taking notice, being aware and mindful is associated with mental health and wellbeing.

On a day to day basis most of us are pretty busy and as a result of overwhelming demands on our time and attention we often go about our days on autopilot, constantly focusing on the next step rather than just being in the moment. We spend much of our time lost in thought thinking about what has happened or what is going to happen and it's not often we get the chance to press the pause button to think about the here and now.

Right now, we probably have more of an opportunity and definitely have a need to stop, take notice and practice gratitude. Being mindful requires you to pay attention, on purpose and without judgement to the present moment. Tuning into your breathing and bodily sensations but also paying attention to our surroundings.

If we are going to use these 5 ways to wellbeing to try and feel better, it is not enough to simply take action, it is also important to notice what we are doing and what benefits we get from it. By taking notice of our intentional actions and resulting outcomes we can choose to do more of the things that impact positively.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- What opportunities can I take or make to be able to take notice more often?

2

- How can I practice slowing down and pausing more often?

3

- What difference will incorporating this into my day to day life make?



5. Give

People who give and are open to receiving have improved mental health and wellbeing.

Giving out of politeness, a sense of duty or obligation is not going to do the trick here. The key to this is choosing to give with the intention of feeling good or making somebody else feel good. When you give, give openly and from the heart. There are many opportunities to give in small ways every day:

- A smile, a compliment, encouragement
- Lending a hand
- Random acts of kindness
- Giving your time

Some people give freely but struggle with receiving.

However, giving is a 2-way process. By opening yourself up to accepting what someone else gives it is good for them as well as you. By becoming more comfortable with the give and take of relationships we build ourselves up as well as give opportunities to others.

During the current social situation there are many vulnerable people who are reliant on the kindness of others to get through lockdown. By thinking about how you can help others, you'll also reap the benefits to your own wellbeing.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- What do you give to others on a regular basis? What do you notice about how you feel when you give?

2

- What could you give to others that you have not thought of before? What small things can you offer that will make you feel good?

3

- What do you give yourself? How can you be more generous to yourself? What 'treats' would improve the quality of your life?



Building the 5 Ways to Wellbeing into a healthy lifestyle

The “Five Ways to Wellbeing” were developed as an equivalent mental health strategy to the “5 a day” for physical health. The Five Ways are based on an extensive review of actions that people can take that are positively associated with mental health and wellbeing. They could be described as a healthy mental diet. Every one of these actions are easily achievable by everybody and can be implemented for free making them accessible to everyone.

No doubt, many of us are already doing lots of these actions and it is considered common sense. However, this booklet is intended to draw our attention to and reflect upon the things that we do that contribute to our mental wellbeing and in by doing so we can make conscious choices to enhance these to look after ourselves during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

It maybe that we notice that we do a lot more of one than others and by noticing this we can take action to create more of a balance for a healthier and happier lifestyle. When we make changes, it takes time for these to be built into regular healthy habits. You will require some effort, motivation and determination to reap and maintain maximum benefits into the future. By putting in the effort and hard work now we can develop greater resilience and thereby improve our ability to respond to future challenges when they arise.



Questions to Aid Reflection

1

- How could implementing the Five Ways have a positive impact on my personal and professional life?

2

- What measures can I put in place to encourage me to use the Five Ways?

3

- Who can support me with this and who can I share this with for greater benefit?



ThinkWise Psychological Wellbeing

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