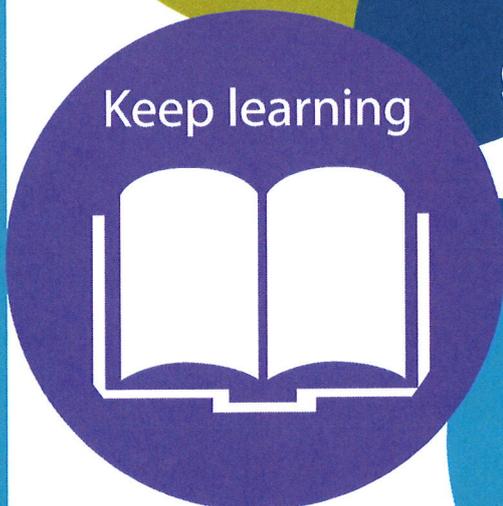


Take5

steps to wellbeing

HSC Health and Social Care



www.mindingyourhead.info

Most of us know when we are mentally and physically well, but sometimes we need a little extra support to keep well.

There are five simple steps to help maintain and improve your wellbeing. Try to build these into your daily life – think of them as your ‘five a day’ for wellbeing.

Take5

steps to wellbeing



Connect

Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these relationships as the cornerstones of your life and spend time developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



Be active

Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.



Take notice

Stop, pause, or take a moment to look around you. What can you see, feel, smell or even taste? Look for beautiful, new, unusual or extraordinary things in your everyday life and think about how that makes you feel.



Keep learning

Don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or sign up for a course. Take on a different responsibility, fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.



Give

Do something nice for a friend or stranger, thank someone, smile, volunteer your time or consider joining a community group. Look out as well as in. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

Adapted from work by the New Economics Foundation commissioned by the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing (www.neweconomics.org).
Artwork designed in association with Belfast Strategic Partnership.

Public Health Agency, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS. Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).

What is Take 5 steps to wellbeing?



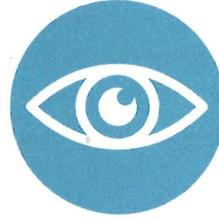
Connect



Keep learning



Be active



Take notice



Give

Take 5 steps to wellbeing is a set of evidence-based public health messages aimed at improving the wellbeing of the whole population. It is based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as the result of research undertaken as part of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing (2008)¹. NEF states that if practised regularly the Five Ways to Wellbeing² will contribute to improving personal wellbeing.

These simple and effective messages are based on solid evidence and draw on a wealth of psychological and economic literature from inter-disciplinary work. **Take 5 steps to wellbeing** leads to a shared understanding that some actions are best supported by organisations or agencies and communities whilst some are best achieved by the individual.

Evidence indicates it is individuals who practise all '5 steps' who have the highest level of wellbeing regardless of circumstances. As a practitioner working in your community, you can use **Take 5 steps to wellbeing** to help identify opportunities to promote wellbeing. You can motivate and support people to 'have a go' and embrace the **Take 5 steps to wellbeing**, and you can also use this approach to support yourself.

This is a preventative approach. It can be used to support interventions, but it is not an intervention in its own right to treat the challenges associated with mental ill health.

¹ Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008). Final Project report. The Government Office for Science, London.

² New Economics Foundation (NEF). (2008). Five ways to wellbeing: The evidence. London. nef.



Connect

Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Social relationships are important to support wellbeing and to act as a buffer against mental ill health. People with low levels of social participation and small primary social networks are more likely to experience common mental health disorders. Having a broad social network, connecting and interacting with others can have a positive benefit on wellbeing. Also the strength of relationships is important, feeling close to someone and valued by them with the key message being that giving time and space to both *strengthen* and *broaden* social networks is important for wellbeing.



Keep learning

Don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or sign up for a course. Take on a different responsibility, fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun to do.

In childhood, learning plays an important role in our social and cognitive development. Learning throughout our life stages contributes to self-esteem, social interaction and active lives, competence and self-efficacy.

Goal setting in adult life, particularly when self-generated and aligned with personal values and motivation, has a positive impact on wellbeing. While not everyone may enjoy learning in some environments or see positive outcomes, it is the case that the activity of learning in itself has benefits and is important for wellbeing.



Be active

Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Exercising makes you feel good. More importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Regular physical activity is associated with greater wellbeing and lower rates of anxiety and depression regardless of age. There is evidence that physical activity protects against cognitive decline in later life. There is general consensus that even a single bout of exercise or physical activity of less than ten minutes can improve mood and make people feel better. Activities can also have the benefit of strengthening interactions with other people e.g when walking.



Take notice

Stop, pause, or take a moment to look around you. What can you see, feel, smell or even taste? Look for beautiful, new, unusual or extraordinary things in your everyday life and think about how that makes you feel.

Research has shown that being trained to be aware of senses, thoughts and feelings over 8-12 weeks has resulted in improved wellbeing for several years². Being aware of what is taking place in the present leads to a more positive state of mind. Heightened awareness enhances an individual's self-understanding and allows an individual to make choices in alignment with his/her own values and intrinsic motivations. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, research into actions that aim to enhance wellbeing have similarly found that goals for behaviour change need to be aligned with personal values to be successful.



Give

Do something nice for a friend, thank someone, smile, volunteer your time or consider joining a community group. Look out as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Helping, giving and sharing are associated with increased self-worth and positive feelings. Giving stimulates the reward system in the brain, making a person feel good and it contributes to gains in cognitive and social functioning, particularly in earlier life, which is important to the development of mental capital and wellbeing. Research has shown that undertaking acts of kindness regularly and over time results in increased wellbeing². Feelings of happiness and life satisfaction are associated with active participation in social and community life. For older people, volunteering is associated with more positive affect and meaning in life.

It is important to note that sometimes doing one activity will incorporate all of the Take 5 steps to wellbeing, e.g. a walk in the park links with Be Active but also:

Connect - meeting people in the park

Keep learning - about the range of plants, trees and wildlife in the park

Take notice - of the sights, sounds and smells in the park including animals and birds

Give - meeting people, sharing and giving of your time and experience to others

Further Reading

The above information is based on the evidence for the 5 ways to wellbeing developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF)².

- Five ways to wellbeing: new applications, new ways of thinking
- Five ways to wellbeing: the evidence
- Wellbeing at work: a review of the literature



You can find the full reports at
www.neweconomics.org



²New Economics Foundation (NEF). (2008). Five ways to wellbeing: The evidence. London. nef.