



# Employees Guide to Looking After Your Mental Health and Wellbeing

Clear, Simple, Smart

V2.0

# Your mental health and wellbeing

## What is mental health?

Mental health affects all parts of our lives. It is the way we think, feel and act and our ability to deal with the ups and downs of life. Mental health can fluctuate over time between good/positive and poor/negative. For some people, their mental health may be relatively consistent, but they may experience an isolated occasion of poor mental health. For others, their mental health may take a dip at certain times of year and for some, they may fluctuate between good and poor mental health on much more of a regular basis.

## Why is it important?

Mental health impacts our ability to handle stress, maintain positive relationships and cope with challenges in our lives. It can affect decisions, reactions, attitudes, behaviours and general moods both at work and at home. The World Health Organisation deems that mental health is an integral and essential component of a person's overall health. There is no health without mental health. Work and other personal issues can have a detrimental impact on many people's lives. This may be experienced as feelings of isolation, anxiety, financial insecurity, emotional issues within your family, concerns about the future or changes in one's ability to enjoy the company of friends or other forms of relaxation. These pressures can lead to mental health and wellbeing issues which can be experienced by anybody; males and females, young and old, staff at all levels within an organisation.

MPA member companies are keen to ensure that employees are able to recognise the symptoms that are often indicators of mental health issues, understand some simple coping strategies and, most importantly, understand that there are many ways in which individuals can be provided with support.



# The following 10 factors are aimed at maintaining positive mental health

## 1 Giving

### Do Kind Things for Others

Helping and being kind not only contributes to the happiness of others, but it can help us feel happier ourselves. It can strengthen our connection with others and provide a source of support. It can also help take our mind off our own worries.



## 2 Relating

### Connect with People

Studies show people with strong relationships are happier, healthier and may even live longer. These relationships may be with family members, friends, work colleagues or neighbours and they can provide a source of support and a sense of belonging. Taking time to build, maintain and strengthen these relationships is important.



## 3 Exercise, diet and sleep

### Take Care of your Body

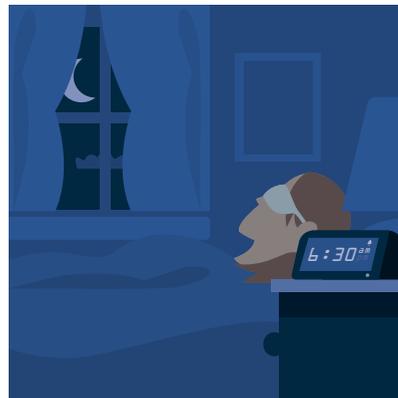
Exercise and being physically active can help us manage, treat and even prevent depression and anxiety. It can boost our confidence, help us manage stress, and help us sleep better. For some, the gym or running may be the answer. For others, a simple 20-minute dog walk, a gentle swim or yoga may be their preference.

What we eat can have a direct impact on our mood. Sugary foods and refined carbohydrates can give us an energy high then cause us to crash, feel sleepy, irritable or both. Alcohol and caffeine

are stimulants that can have a negative impact on mood, especially for those suffering with anxiety or depression.

We need a varied diet, ideally mostly of unprocessed foods including vegetables and fruit. Foods that are as close to their natural state tend to have more nutrients and fibre which support health and happiness.

Sleeping well is essential for our bodies, mood and mind. Getting enough sleep helps us think better and manage our emotions. Most adults should aim for around 7-9 hours per night. Quality sleep is important. Blocking outside light, limiting noise, eliminating technology and keeping the temperature cool are all suggestions for a good night's sleep.



## 4 Awareness

### Being Mindful

Mindfulness is a skill that requires practice. It is the process of openly paying attention to our experience in the present moment. It helps us notice what we are experiencing and whether it supports or is harmful for our wellbeing, so we can decide where we want to focus. So rather than being on autopilot or at the mercy of our busy life, busy mind or our devices, we can better choose where to place our attention. This can help us feel calmer and more in control.

## 5 Trying out

### Keep Learning New Things

Continuing to learn, even later in life, can help us feel good and function well.

For some people, they may want to learn something new at work and perhaps do a training course. For others, they may wish to take on a new hobby or restart a hobby. There are positive mental health impacts associated with many hobbies, including sports, artistic/creative interests and music



## 6 Direction

### Have Goals to look forward to

Finding and working towards meaningful goals is a way of connecting the present to the future and research shows it can boost our happiness and wellbeing.

For some people, working towards a new qualification at work may be a goal that is meaningful to them. For others, the goal may not be work related at all. It may be tidying the garage, travelling more or spending more time with the family.

Working on goals we've chosen and are interested in can give us a sense of direction, a sense of control and help us to find meaning and purpose.



## 7 Resilience

### Find Ways to bounce back

We can learn skills, practices and habits of thinking that can help to boost and build our resilience and lower our risk of depression and anxiety.

Investing in your own mental health is a good way of boosting our resilience. Challenging instant negative thinking to manage our emotions and reactions is another way of building resilience.

Reflecting on how you have 'bounced back' in the past is a good way to build future resilience. Have you experienced similar difficulties before? How did you deal with them? What helped you move forward? Can you apply the same in this scenario?



## 8 Emotions

### Look for what's good

Studies show the experience of pleasant emotions can help undo the potential damage chronic exposure to stress can have in our brains. However, we are fighting against evolution as humans have evolved to anticipate threat and danger and to focus on what might be wrong, rather than right. The challenge is to train ourselves to focus on what is good in our lives and to practice gratitude. Just writing down three things a day that have been good can have a positive effect on how we feel.



we'll make mistakes and sometimes fail is an important component of psychological wellbeing.

If a friend messed up or failed at something and asked for your opinion, what would you say to them? If you did the same thing, what would you say to yourself? Often people are harsher on themselves than others. Being kind and compassionate to yourself when things go wrong, focusing on what you can do better next time, but not being too hard on yourself is important for your happiness and mental wellbeing.

about the future, have greater life satisfaction, have higher psychological wellbeing and feel better about themselves .

Meaning can be about having a sense of purpose or direction, feeling like you can make a difference or understanding what part you play in the world round you.

Friends, family, pets, work, volunteering, learning, hobbies, creative pursuits, nature and faith are all examples of things that give life meaning. Working on and towards these things enables longer-term satisfaction and fulfilment.

Reflecting on what brings meaning to our lives is a good exercise. Helping others and focusing on the other elements that bring happiness, including connecting with others and setting goals.

*Source: Action for Happiness, 2011*

## 10 Meaning

### Be part of something bigger

People who have a sense of meaning in life tend to experience more frequent and stronger positive emotions, feel more positive

## 9 Acceptance

### Be Comfortable with who you are

How we feel about ourselves can have a big influence on how happy and resilient we are. Accepting that, like all human beings, we have strengths and imperfections,



# Recognising the symptoms of mental health and wellbeing issues

It can be difficult to recognise that you may need support even though you may have noticed changes in the way you think or feel which are causing you problems in your day-to-day life. Seeking help early can speed up your recovery, and your return to a normal, healthy and positive life. If you recognise some of the symptoms below, it could be a sign that you are experiencing mental health issues and need some support:

- Being restless, irritable.
- Extreme fear or worry, out of proportion for the situation.
- Changes in your mood or having a low mood for a prolonged period.
- Difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions.
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Having no appetite and losing weight or eating more than usual and gaining weight.
- Unhelpful coping mechanisms, including smoking, alcohol or drugs.
- Finding it difficult to manage everyday life and undertake normal activities e.g. getting up, going to work, preparing meals, socialising, undertaking normal hobbies and activities.
- Feeling unusually emotional, tearful, angry.
- Feeling unmotivated to do daily tasks.
- Becoming isolated and withdrawn.
- Self-harming and/or having suicidal thoughts.



# Where to get help?

**Speak to someone about how you are feeling and seek support. This could be a manager, work colleague, or mental health firstaider. Companies are increasingly providing education and training in mental health and there is a legal duty of care for employee health in the workplace, including mental health. An alternative option might be the company EAP scheme if your company has one in place, or indeed your GP. There are also organisations that will help and support your recovery:**

## NHS Mental Health Services

### UK

**Emergency:** Call 999 or go to a hospital

**Urgent Support:** Call your GP or 111

Online support: Check your mental health symptoms – [NHS 111](#)

### NHS Finder Service

#### NHS Talking Therapies self-referral

Information about local NHS therapy services for certain mental health problems. You can self-refer (England only) but you must be registered with a GP.

[nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service](https://nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service)

### Scotland

Call your GP or 111, [NHS 24 Home](#) | NHS 24 Breathing Space Confidential Phone service : 0800 838587

### Wales

Call 111, Option 2

The Mental Health Helpline for Wales provides advice and also a Community Advice & Listening Line – 0800 132 737 or text help to 81066

### Northern Ireland

NI Direct provides directions to information on mental health support and services. Mental health support | [nidirect](#)

### ROI

Information, advice, support and services Mental health – [HSE.ie](#)

## Company EAP Schemes

Many companies provide an employee assistance programme, intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their health and wellbeing. These generally include assessment, short-term counselling and referral services for employees and their immediate family. These are usually accessible 24/7 by phone. Ask your manager or HR Department for details.

## Charities

There are a wide range of charities offering a wide range of free services:

### Samaritans

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You can visit some Samaritans branches in person. Samaritans also have a Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm – 11pm every day)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) 24/7 Helpline: 116 123

Email: [Jo@samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org)

### Lighthouse Charity

Support for emotional, physical and financial wellbeing for those in Construction and their Families

24/7 Helpline: UK 0345 605 1956; ROI 1800 939 122 Text HARDHAT to 85258 (in the UK) or 50808 (ROI)

Live Chat (9am – 6pm)

[www.constructionindustryhelpline.com](http://www.constructionindustryhelpline.com)

### Hub of Hope

[hubofhope.co.uk](http://hubofhope.co.uk)

UK-wide mental health service database.

### Mikeysline (Scotland)

<https://mikeysline.co.uk>

Evening Text Service: 07786207755. Plus telephone, online support and one to one sessions

### MIND

Helpline for Support (not crisis) (Mon-Fri 0900-1800): 0300 102 1234

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### Staying Safe (from suicidal thoughts)

<https://stayingSAFE.net>

### Making a Safety Plan

<https://stayingSAFE.net/safetyplan>

### Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Provides a helpline for anyone affected by suicide or suicidal thought.

[thecalmzone.net](http://thecalmzone.net)

0800 58 58 58

### National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK

Open from 6pm to midnight every day.

[spuk.org.uk/national-suicide-prevention-helpline-uk/](http://spuk.org.uk/national-suicide-prevention-helpline-uk/)

0800 689 5652 or 0800 689 0880

### The Shout Service

Shout is a free, confidential, 24/7 text support service for anyone in the UK struggling to cope.

To start a conversation, text the word 'Shout' to 85258.

<https://giveusashout.org/get-help/how-shout-works/>



Hub of Hope



Mikeysline

IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK



Staying Safe  
from suicidal thoughts



The Mineral Products Association is the trade association for the aggregates, asphalt, cement, concrete, dimension stone, lime, mortar and industrial sand industries.

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