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# A guide to help you look after your mental wellbeing

Garioch



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# intro

Do you look after your own mental wellbeing? Do you know there are simple things you can do to look after yours?

Mind yer Mind is a new campaign, organised by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership (ACPP), to remind us of the importance of looking after your mental wellbeing, and to give you some ideas for looking after yours.

Research shows that there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing, and you'll be finding out more about these as you work your way through this book. For now, we've listed them below:

Connections, Learning, Taking Notice, Giving and Being Active

Our team has pulled together some helpful information for anyone who would like to try a new activity within one of these five areas. There are also some wise words, plus some hints and tips from our mental wellbeing ambassadors from around Aberdeenshire.

Each of the above activities has a dedicated section in this guide, and at the end of each section there are links to resources and activities within your local area so feel free to give some a go!

If you do decide to try something new, we'd love to hear about it. If you share any photos or updates on social media, remember to use the hashtag #mindyermind so we can see.

Finally, if you or someone you know would like additional support, there are some helpful organisations and support services listed at the end.

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## Why these 5 steps are an important part of looking after your mental wellbeing:

- 1. Connections** – good relationships help to build a sense of belonging, allowing you to share experiences, and support each other.
- 2. Learning** – acquiring new skills boosts your confidence, gives you a sense of purpose, and helps you connect with others.
- 3. Taking notice** – paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. It can help you understand yourself and the world better.
- 4. Giving** – creates positive feelings, giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth, and helps you connect with others.
- 5. Being Active** – this can help to raise your self-esteem by setting and achieving goals, and by causing chemical changes in your brain that have a positive impact on mood.



# active

Being active is great for our physical health, but it's also really good for our mental health and wellbeing. If you are thinking about taking up an activity to boost your mental wellbeing, it's important to choose one that you will enjoy, and that you can make part of your life.

**There is lots of evidence to show that being active helps your mental wellbeing in the following ways:**

- It helps to raise your self-esteem, whether your activity is solo or in a group
- It encourages you to set goals or challenges and when you go on to achieve them that is good for your mood and self-confidence.
- Physical activity causes chemical changes in your brain, which in turn can have a positive impact on your mood

**We know that being active is good for physical health, but do you know it's great for mental well being too?**

**“You want to move well to feel well. So enjoy the fitness and happiness it can bring you.”**

–  
**Hannah Miley from Inverurie**  
*Triple Olympian from Inverurie*



“My work can be a bit busy and intense. I love the contrast of being free to run in the hills with friends and explore new places. Whatever the weather, the adventures, views, exercise and camaraderie stimulate my body, brain and soul. Pushing myself in the mountains keeps me fit, alert and alive.”

–  
**Jim Savege from Deeside**  
*Aberdeenshire Council Chief Executive*

If you'd like to try out a new activity in your local area, why not get in touch with the following organisations.

1. **Active Schools**  
[visit site](#)
2. **Walks to Health**  
[visit site](#)
3. **Westhill Walkers**  
[visit site](#)
4. **Ury Riverside Park Run**  
[visit site](#)
5. **Garioch Sports Centre**  
[visit site](#)

## five ways to get active today

We can all bring more activity into our lives, and if you need some hints and tips about where to start, how about trying one, some or all of the following?

1. Start walking when you can. Early in the morning, at lunchtime, after work, whenever suits you.
2. Look online for free workouts, given by professionals – there are lots to choose from!
3. If you have a disability, look at how you can build extra activity into things you do each day
4. Research the activities available in your local area – dance classes, swimming, running clubs, yoga, anything goes!
5. Practice stretches and exercises that can be done as you watch TV

# connections



Forming and maintaining good relationships with people around you is very important for your mental wellbeing. Staying in touch with family and friends can help us to feel happier and more secure. The simple act of talking to a shop assistant or holding the door open for someone can also help to lift our mood.

**There is lots of evidence to show that connecting with other people can help your mental wellbeing in the following ways:**

- Good connections can help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Good connections provide emotional support and allow you to support others
- Keeping in contact gives you an opportunity to share positive experiences.

**Recognising the importance of good relationships and defining new ways of developing and maintaining strong social connections are integral to our wellbeing.**

**“happiness and health aren’t a result of wealth, fame or working hard, but come instead from our relationships.”**

–  
Vaillant, G.E. (2012). *Triumphs of Experience. The men of the Harvard Grant study.* Belknap Press: World.



“I love activities that foster connection with others because not only do they help me to grow physically, spiritually and mentally fit, but they also allow me to nurture healthy relationships with those I am connected to.”

–  
**Lee Morrison from Huntly**  
*Senior Activity and Health Practitioner*

If you’d like to try out a new activity in your local area, why not get in touch with the following organisations.

1. **Grampian Opportunities**  
[✉ email](#)
2. **Inverurie and District Men’s Shed**  
[✉ visit site](#)
3. **Westhill Men’s Shed**  
[✉ visit site](#)
4. **Conversation Cafes**  
[✉ visit site](#)
5. **Knit and Natter - Libraries**  
[✉ visit site](#)

## five ways to improve connections

There are things that we can all do to improve our social connections, which will in turn help our mental wellbeing, and we’ve pulled together some ideas to start you off!

1. Put time aside to connect with family and friends – check your phone less when you do!
2. Listen to what other people have to say without judging or offering your opinion
3. Send a text to a friend or colleague that you haven’t seen for a while
4. Talk to your neighbours, ask them how they are and really listen to their answer
5. Try making small talk with shop assistants, the postie, or delivery drivers – you’ll make their day too

# giving



The acts of giving and showing kindness are good for our mental wellbeing as well as for those who are on the receiving end of our kindness. The acts of kindness could be small gestures towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

**Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing in the following ways:**

- Giving to others creates positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Acts of kindness, no matter how small, give you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- The act of giving helps you connect with other people, which is good for your self-esteem

**People who act generously, even in small ways, benefit from adopting a positive self-identity as a 'good' person.**

Otake K, Shimai S, Tanaka-Matsumi J, Otsui K & Frederickson BL (2006) Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindness intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 7 (3) 361–375.

**“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”**

—  
**Sir Winston Churchill**  
*Prime Minister 1940 -1945*



“Its not what you gather, its what you scatter”. The enjoyment and happiness that my activities bring to others gives me a sense of achievement, joy and purpose, which is a core part of my own wellbeing”

—  
**Isobel Gregory from Pitullie**  
*“Grandma Griggly”*

If you'd like to try out a new activity in your local area, why not get in touch with the following organisations.

1. **Inverurie Community Council Litter Picking Initiative**  
[facebook page](#)
2. **Knit a Cosy Bosie**  
[visit site](#)
3. **The Spark**  
[visit site](#)
4. **Conversations Cafes**  
[visit site](#)
5. **Community Café , Westhill**  
[visit site](#)

## five ways to give and show kindness

If you would like to see if giving to others and showing kindness has a positive effect on your mental wellbeing, we've pulled together some hints and tips that you could try today:

1. Say 'thank you' when someone does something for you
2. Spend time with someone that you know would like some company, whether a family member, friend, or neighbour.
3. Look for any charities or volunteer groups in your area that need extra support right now.
4. Take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or action, and start a conversation with them.
5. Send a card to someone you haven't seen for a long time, let them know you are thinking about them

# learning



Research has shown that learning new skills can have a positive impact on our mental wellbeing. Why not think about something that you are interested in, so that learning is enjoyable and you are more likely to continue with? Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

**Evidence shows that learning helps to promote positive mental wellbeing in the following ways:**

- Learning new skills can boost your self-confidence and raise your self-esteem
- Learning can help you to build a sense of purpose
- Learning can help you to meet new people and form new connections

**Did you know that learning something new activates the release of the 'feel-good' chemical dopamine in the brain and helps you cope with the stress and strain of everyday life while increasing your energy levels and immunity?**

**“It’s never too late to try something new.”**



–  
**Evelyn Glennie from Methlick**  
*World Renowned Percussionist*



As a professional athlete it is inevitable that my career will come to an end which can be a daunting thought. To provide stability and purpose within myself away from football I try to broaden my mind and interests. I listen to podcasts, read and I am currently studying for a Masters degree, which enables me to have an identity away from football.

–  
**Kim Little from Mintlaw**  
*Professional Footballer*

If you’d like to try learning new skills in your local area, why not get in touch with the following organisations.

1. **The Garioch Community Kitchen**  
[visit site](#)
2. **Grampian Opportunities**  
[email](#)
3. **Community Learning and Development**  
[visit site](#)
4. **Library Innovation Network Aberdeenshire (LINA)**  
[visit site](#)
5. **The Foyer**  
[visit site](#)

## five ways pick up something new

Try learning something new, see what benefit it has on your mental wellbeing. Why not try one, some or all of the following:

1. Take up cooking or learn to cook some new meals. Listen to your favourite music at the same for extra benefit!
2. Sign up for a course, online or at a local college. There’s lots of free options online.
3. Take up DIY or gardening. Learn how to fix things in your home, or what you can plant at this time of year. Do both and learn how to make a window box!
4. Take up a new hobby. From drawing to chess, from a new language to a musical instrument, try something that really interests you.
5. Ask for extra responsibility at work. Think about what you’d like to do more of and ask your manager if there are any opportunities to learn.

# taking notice



Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness “mindfulness”. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

## Evidence shows that pausing to take notice helps your mental wellbeing in the following ways:

- Taking notice can strengthen and broaden your awareness
- Appreciating the moment can help to reaffirm your priorities.
- Heightened awareness helps you to understand your thoughts and feelings better, and allows you to make positive choices based on what is important to you

“It’s easy to stop noticing the world around us. It’s also easy to lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling and to end up living ‘in our heads’ – caught up in our thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are driving our emotions and behaviour”

*Professor Mark Williams, former Director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre*

“Living in the present moment means letting go of the past and not waiting for the future.”



—  
Oprah Winfrey



Awareness of my breath allows me to experience the present and deal with what is right in front of me. It presses pause on re-living the past or worrying about the future and let’s me explore the moment. You can’t breathe in the past or the future, the only breath you have is now.

—  
**Elaine Cochrane from Inverurie**  
*Yoga Teacher*

If you’d like to try activities that involve taking notice in your local area, why not get in touch with the following organisations.

1. **Countryside Rangers**  
[visit site](#)
2. **The Garioch Sports Centre**  
[visit site](#)
3. **The Bennachie Leisure Centre**  
[visit site](#)
4. **NESBReC**  
[visit site](#)
5. **Meditation Classes**  
[visit site](#)

## five ways be a little more mindful

1. Here are 5 ways you can try taking notice of world around you:
2. Notice everyday things. The taste of food, feeling the wind on your face, and listening to sounds around you can all help to give perspective.
3. Be aware of your breathing. Take deep breathes in and out, keeping it comfortable, and focus on how each breath feels
4. Do something to help you see the world in a new way. Sit somewhere different at work, take a different route for your walk, or run, and notice the new sights.
5. Take notice of your thoughts and feelings and remember that they are all ok and valid. Let them come and go if you can and remember that worries will pass.
6. Spend time in nature. Be aware of colours, sounds, textures and reflections, and take a photo of things you love seeing.

# 5 things you can do if you feel like your mental wellbeing is suffering:

1. **Ask for help** – we can all feel tired and overwhelmed, and if it ever feels too much, ask your friends or family for help.
2. **Talk about your feelings** – opening up to someone you trust can help you stay in good mental health.
3. **Eat well** – your brain needs a balanced diet to function properly, and being in good physical health is good for your mental health.
4. **Drink sensibly** – as the effects of alcohol wear off, it affects the brain and rest of your body, which in turn affects your mental wellbeing.
5. **Take a break** – whether a 5-minute break from work, or a weekend escape and change of scene, a break can be enough to destress you.

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# 5 ways to approach someone who you think is struggling with their mental wellbeing:

1. Spend some time with them, without any distractions
2. Let them talk as much or as little as they want without offering advice or your opinion
3. Listen carefully to what they have to say, and show you understand their feelings
4. Talk about mental wellbeing and share some tips
5. If appropriate, encourage them to seek professional help



# mind yer mind

# live and online

We invited 5 of our mental wellbeing ambassadors to join us for some interesting discussions around how they look after their mental wellbeing, as well as answering questions that you might have.

**Our ambassadors are:**

**Dame Evelyn Glennie** – ‘Learning’

**Hannah Miley** – ‘Active’

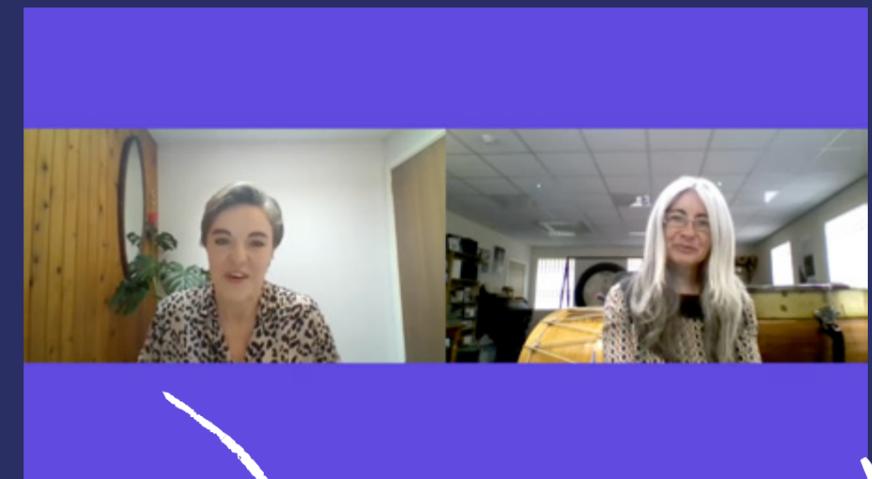
**Simon Maryan** – ‘Taking Notice’

**Lee Morrison** – ‘Connections’

**Isobel Gregory, AKA ‘Grandma Griggly’** – ‘Giving’

We will also be joined by **Dr.Emma Hepburn**, a Clinical Psychologist, who will be talking in more detail about why some activities are so good for our mental wellbeing, as well as answering some of your questions.

# mind yer mind live event



# Some more helpful resources

You can read more about the 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing on the [NHS website](#)

For further information on managing your mental health and wellbeing, and where to go for support, visit the [Aberdeenshire Council website](#)

If you, or someone you know, needs to talk to someone now, the Samaritans offer support and advice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Call the Samaritans on 116123

Email them on [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership:

Find out more about Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership, and the work we do in the region by visiting our website

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

[communityplanning@ouraberdeenshire.org.uk](mailto:communityplanning@ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)

Tel: 01224 664316

For more information on the range of services and activities available in your area of Aberdeenshire, please contact your local Community Planning Office on [garioch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:garioch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

For more information visit [mindyermind.com](http://mindyermind.com) or scan the code below



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