



Six ways to improve
your Well-being



Introduction

What can you do to take simple but reliable steps?

Everyone faces challenges in life. How big or difficult these challenges are will be different for each of us but we all know what it's like to feel drained and struggling to cope. This booklet is about ways to build on your strengths and to increase your resilience in order to meet the challenges we all encounter from time to time.

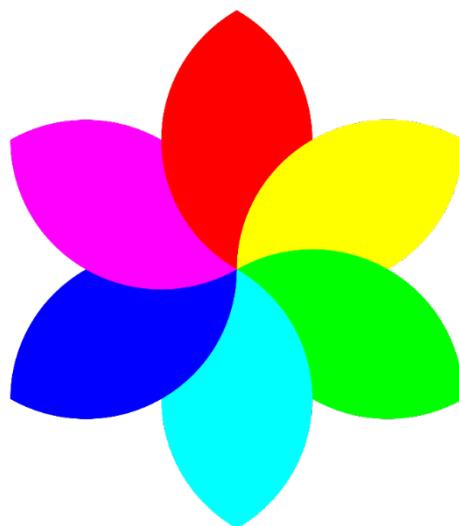
It is also about going further than coping and surviving and realising that there is good evidence that a range of simple actions are strongly linked to people feeling happier and more satisfied with their lives.

It is about knowing that there are actions you can take that will build up your health and wellbeing and then doing something about it yourself – taking small steps to living well.

It is all about choice and we make choices all the time. However most of the time we are not even aware of the choices we are making because we think we do not have a choice.

Consider this for a moment – what happens when someone gives us a compliment. We can choose to feel good about it or choose to feel annoyed or not even notice. Similarly, when someone shouts at us, we can make a choice to shout back and feel very angry or we can choose to remain calm and forgive the person. The event does not have to determine our experience – we can choose what to make of it and how to respond.

The '6 ways to wellbeing' are about taking action and making conscious and deliberate choices to look after our wellbeing. The important thing is what do they mean to you and how willing you are to change?



1. Connect...

With the people around you. With 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.

Being well connected is associated with increased mental health and wellbeing

Connecting with people could be as simple as telling a joke, congratulating someone, giving a hug or just saying hello. There are additional ways of being in touch and connected that are also important for your important well-being:

- Connecting with self and having quiet moments
- Connecting with nature, pets and animals
- Connecting with one's spiritual needs or God if you are a believer

There are important differences between making contact, connecting and colliding! Sometimes, connecting with people's distress can leave us feeling challenged and drained and too many contacts can make us feel we are not properly connected with anyone. Move out of relationships that make you feel unsafe, lower your self-esteem or draw you into unhealthy habits. As with all things in life, a balance is needed. The research points that social connection benefits to increase of happiness, better health and longer life.

Ways to stay connected with others, friends, family, teachers:

- Make more time for people that matter. Commit to a certain amount of time together each day or week—without phones, iPads or other electronic devices. You can cook together, eat together, and laugh together. These are good ways to spend time together bonding and talking about your day.
- Share your interest -go shopping, go to cinema, swimming, sport club, share a book you read.
- Pay attention to what people are saying and ask people questions about themselves. Most people enjoy talking about their work, family, or hobbies, and it is an easy way to start a conversation. Be curious!
- Create rituals-special handshake, cute nicknames, or do something nice every weekend.
- Ask if you need specific kind of help. Even the best of friends can't read your mind.
- Appreciate, enjoy and say thank you to people that help you and make you happy. You may think positive thoughts but sharing them works wonders.
- Make a list of the people you want to contact regularly. If necessary, add a reminder to your calendar.

By making choices and attending to the positive connections we can be more in control of our lives, take up the driving seat and become committed to working on living well.

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Questions to aid reflection

1. How would you know if you were connecting or just making contact? What makes the difference?
2. Think of new ways of connected with people. Make three new connections today. How this can enrich your day/life?
3. What do you give yourself? How can you be more generous and appreciative to yourself? What 'treats' would improve your experience of life?

'People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you make them feel'-Maya Angelou



2.Keep Learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at school, home, and community. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

A life-style that includes valuing learning is positively associated with mental health and wellbeing

It can be hard though to feel motivated to learn all the time, especially if because of our circumstances we are told we have to learn specific things whether we are interested in them or not, whether we value them or not. Learning can come to feel more like a chore and a 'tick box exercise'.

How we think about learning and what we say to ourselves about it will make it more possible and satisfying or more of a struggle or even obstacle. Everyone can learn. There is huge difference between us saying "I have to..." and "I want to..." When we use language like 'I have to', we feel pushed and see the learning as a task or a chore. There is a danger that with that kind of mind set, we not only fail to enjoy the experience but also won't be able to retain much of the new learning.

Learning new skills and practicing and refining old ones are keys to personal growth. It keeps us interested and focused, and opening us to new possibilities. We don't necessarily have to sign up for a college course degree or complete master's degree, simple daily opportunities really count.

You can enrol in a class that intrigues you, join a book group, hiking club or any other group. You can learn how to cook a new recipe, play a new computer game, visit a museum or go online to find out information about something you are curious.

We can also learn something new about the people we meet. For example, you may wish to learn more about the other person's hopes and wishes, what makes them smile, what they value in life, their strengths and inner resources etc.

Alternatively, the environment we are living in – what is going on that may be interesting to visit or take part in?

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Questions to aid reflection

1. What do I think about 'Learning'? Would I like to learn a new thing each day?
2. What would I like to learn about? What interests me, what do I value, what would be useful to learn?
3. What do I need to do to make learning fun and something I look forward to?

'As long as you live, keep learning how to live'-Seneca



3.Be Active...

Go outside. Play a game. Do gardening. Do any exercise that makes you feel good. Choose an activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

People who are active have improved mental health and wellbeing

Regular exercise has many benefits like; improve your sleep; increase your energy; decrease some kinds of pain; boost your immune system. It also helps to decrease stress, anger and tension; reduces anxiety and depression and help with weight management.

Different people engage in different forms and different levels of activities. Being active is important for both our physical and mental health. Small changes in levels of activity can make a big difference. Just ten minutes of physical activity has been shown to be beneficial for wellbeing. This doesn't mean we have to use our whole body either, if some movements are painful then only chose activities which are comfortable and possible for you.

We need to consciously try and make an effort to be a little more active. Sometimes we may complain that we don't have enough time, or we are too busy to take on activities. The reality is we all get 24 hours in a day. It is up to us to be willing to make slight adjustments to our lifestyle or our daily routine thereby creating a bit more space to be active.

It all comes back to choice, and how we set our personal priorities. Sometimes it may feel as if we have been very active during the day as we feel exhausted and drained towards the later part of the day. When we reflect back on the day, we may find that although our mind has been very active, we have not been that physically active. Mental extortion can be overcome by keeping our physical health in good shape and the key to this is committing to some form of physical activities as part of our routine.

People often feel guilty about taking a break from their responsibilities to focus on their emotional needs. They also feel that they have several items in their list of "Things to do" that they have yet to complete and worry that by taking the break they could be merely wasting their time and get more distracted rather than feeling energised and focussed.

Actually, it is the other way round. When we take even a 5-minute break to positively refresh ourselves we can end up being in a more resourceful state and then use our time more productively.

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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 at home / school? What can we do together?
3. Are there any minor adjustments I can make in my life that can help me be more active?(Remember 'small changes can make a big difference')

'Whatever you want to do, do it now. There are only so many tomorrows'-Michael London



4. Take notice/Show gratitude...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what are feeling.

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

Most of us are fairly busy. Our mind is active throughout the day. We constantly seem to be doing something. We focus on the next step and the next task in hand. Most importantly, we forget to take notice, to be aware and mindful of any beauty and peacefulness in our surroundings, to be alert and awake rather than lost in thoughts or forgetful of where we are and what is happening around us.

To take notice is to pause, even if for a brief period, to spend some time in silence and reflect on our experiences, to look up and give time and attention to being aware of where we are and what is before us.

To take notice is to be in the present, in the 'here and now' and tune in not only to our bodily sensations, our breathing and our experiences but also to what is going around us, in our surroundings.

Build a habit of counting your blessings just by paying attention each day to things you're glad to have in your life. Slow down and notice what is around you. For example: "Wow, the sky is beautiful today! What an incredible world we live in," or, "There's Sara! It was so nice of her to help me yesterday."

Gratitude doesn't just feel good. Making a habit of gratitude can also be good for us. Like other positive emotions, feeling grateful on a regular basis can have a big effect on our lives

Positive emotions open us up to more possibilities. They boost our ability to learn and make good decisions. Positive emotions balance out negative emotions. People who often feel grateful and appreciative are happier, less stressed, and less depressed. Gratitude is like a U-turn on complaining or thinking about what we don't have.

One positive emotion often leads to another. When we feel grateful, we might also feel happy, calm, joyful, or loving.

Gratitude can lead to positive actions. When we feel grateful for someone's kindness toward us, we may be more likely to do a kindness in return. Your gratitude also can have a positive effect on someone else's actions. Thanking people can make it more likely they'll do a kindness again.

Gratitude helps us build better relationships. When we feel and express heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to people in our lives, it creates loving bonds, builds trust, and helps you feel closer.

4. Take Notice/ Show gratitude...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Questions to aid reflection

1. Noticing and appreciating the good things around you. What opportunities can I make to take notice more often?
2. Give yourself a bit of headspace at least once a day. How can I practice slowing down and pausing more often?
3. What difference incorporating this in my day will make?

'Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you will look back and realise they were the big things'-Robert Brault



5. Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

People who enjoy giving and are open to receiving have improved mental health and wellbeing

Every relationship is one of give and take. 'The more we give the more we receive' is a wise old man saying.

Giving is associated with mental wellbeing. There is a difference though in giving for the sake of politeness, obligation or duty and giving because your intention is to feel good. When you are in a frame of mind in which you feel good in the very act of giving, this is going to enhance your wellbeing and can also contribute to the wellbeing of the person whose life you touch.

When you give, give openly and from the heart. Research shows that students who performed five acts of kindness a day helps to increase their happiness, help you feel needed and effective; take your mind off your own worries for a while; add a sense of purpose and meaning to your life.

There are many opportunities to give in small ways every day:

- Giving a smile, a compliment, encouragement.
- Giving a hand, a pen, a sweet
- Give a way to an elderly person, hold the elevator to a stranger
- Giving your time, a silent or a prayer.
- Give yourself the gift of connecting, of being active, of noticing, of respect for your body.
- Giving thanks and being grateful for whatever good is happening in your life.
- Give yourself a break when you need one — be kinder to yourself too.
- Volunteer-giving your time, help, support to others

Some people say that they find giving easy, but that they don't feel as comfortable to receive. This is especially true when it comes to receiving compliments. They may murmur a quick 'thank you' but don't really accept the compliment or are dismissive.

Giving is a two way process. It should bring joy to the giver as well as benefit to the receiver. It is about sharing that feeling. Becoming more comfortable with the 'give and take' of everyday life, we build ourselves up as well as give opportunities to others. So try to give yourself some compliments too sometimes.

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Questions to aid reflection

1. What do you give others on a regular basis? Do you notice what it's like for you when you give to others?
2. What three small act of kindness you can give others that you haven't thought of before? Notice how this would make you feel good about?
3. What do you give yourself? How can you be more generous and appreciative to yourself? What 'treats' would improve your experience of life?

'No act of kindness, no matter how small is ever wasted'-Aesop



6. Respect your body...

Exercise, eat a balanced diet and get plenty of sleep. Avoid harming your body through risky behaviours. Looking after yourself physically contributes to your overall wellbeing.

Looking after your physical- self promotes good wellbeing

Accept Your Body

Nobody's perfect. Everybody wants to be liked and accepted just as they are. That is true for every BODY, too! See your body the way it is. Be less of a critic. Be more of a friend.

Don't body-shame yourself. When you make harsh comments about your own body, it hurts your self-esteem. That's true whether you say it out loud or think it to yourself. It hurts just as much as if someone else said it. Respect yourself, even if you have things to work on.

Build a better habit. Do you have a habit of putting your body down? To break that bad habit, build a good one in its place. Tell yourself what you like instead of what you don't. Keep doing it until it is a habit.

Take Care of Your Body

Eat healthy foods. Learn what foods are good for you, and how much is the right amount. Take your time when you eat. Really taste your food. Enjoy it. Eating right helps you look your best. It gives you the energy you need and it boosts your body image. When you treat your body right, you feel good about yourself.

Get good sleep. Learn how much sleep you need for your age. Get to bed on time. Turn off screens hours before bedtime so you can sleep well. When we are asleep, the body can concentrate on healing itself. Minimal amounts of energy are needed to maintain body functioning while we sleep. When we don't get enough sleep, we can experience a variety of other symptoms, such as fatigue and a lack of concentration.

Be active every day. Your body needs to move to be strong, fit, and healthy. You can be active by playing a sport. You can run, walk; work out, do yoga, swim, or dance. Pick activities you like. Enjoy the fun you can have.

Keep to a healthy weight. Being a healthy weight is good for you. And it helps you feel good about your body. However, don't try to diet on your own. Always talk to your parent or doctor. Your doctor can suggest ways you can keep to a weight that's right for you.

Pain and stress are known to interact and to have a negative impact on the body. Trying to help your body and mind relax by using mindfulness techniques and generally looking after your body so it isn't overtired or harmed are very important to prevent extra pain from occurring and can even lessen the sensation of pain for some people.

Staying healthy physically can help you stay healthy emotionally too. If you are keeping fit to the best of your ability, your body will be strong and help you to cope with stress and fight illness.

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Questions to aid reflection

1. What behaviours do you have which may be damaging for your body?
2. Be more active, eat nutritious food, drink more water, and sleep well. What ways can you think of to improve your sleep, diet and exercise levels?
3. Notice which healthy actions lift your mood. Set yourself some goals for changing how you treat your body -what, when, how much

***'Your body is your temple. Keep it clean and pure for the soul to reside in it'-
B.K.S.Lyengar***



The '6 Ways to Wellbeing' are based on some of the key components of a healthy emotional or social 'diet'. All six of these suggestions are free, easily achievable and applicable to anyone's life regardless of their circumstances.

Many of us might be already doing some of the '6 ways' some of the time without even being aware of it. These simple ways of being might come as a common sense for most, but as we know, common sense is not necessarily common practice and choosing to change our habits can be hard work.

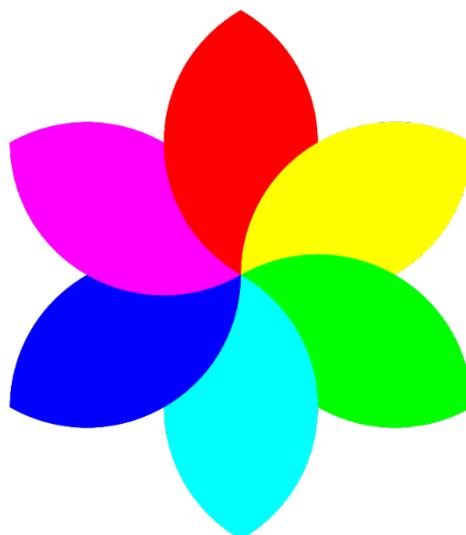
It may also be helpful when thinking of the '6 ways' to focus on what we are doing least of, and attending to those things in order to gain a better balance.

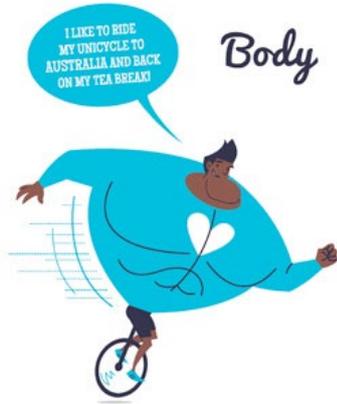
When we decide to change our behaviour or learn new skills, we need to put them into practice and make conscious attempts to keep doing them regularly.

Making anything, part of our life needs commitment and perseverance. It is just so easy to slip back to previous lifestyle patterns and not make and sustain changes. We know that we will not get fit just going to the gym once or twice.

The power and value of the "6 Ways to Wellbeing" is a simple concept, which lies in us finding ways that work for us, consistently taking action and noticing the difference.

Only then, it becomes possible to sustain our commitment to living a healthier and more satisfying life. As we develop our strengths and resources, we will also be more resilient and be more able to deal with challenges as and when they arise.





WHAT DO YOU DO TO **BE ACTIVE**?



WHAT DO YOU DO TO **KEEP LEARNING**?



WHAT DO YOU DO TO **CONNECT**?



WHAT DO YOU DO TO **TAKE NOTICE**?



WHAT DO YOU DO TO **CARE**?



WHAT DO YOU DO TO **GIVE**?



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