

Wellbeing newsletter

How to build healthy habits and start conversations around mental health

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Making People Better



In this issue, we explore how to get back on track with exercise, tips for improving your heart health, World Cancer Day 2025, and how to have conversations about mental health.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

Time to Talk Day: Let's start the conversation about mental health

On **Time to Talk Day**, taking place on **February 6, 2025**, we're encouraged to have conversations about our mental health. It may sound simple, but talking openly about mental health can make a world of difference in supporting ourselves and others.

Many people find it difficult to open up about their feelings or sharing what they're struggling with. Whether it's the fear of ostracization, embarrassment, or even not wanting to worry other people, many people lock these feelings up in their mind – having a profound impact on their mental health.

Mental health issues can affect anyone, regardless of age, background, or situation. One in four people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England, and one in six people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety) in any given week in England.

But all too often, those who are struggling feel isolated and alone. It's essential that we break the stigma, normalise discussions around mental health, and create supportive environments where people feel safe to talk about their challenges.



Why is Talking Important?

Discussing mental health openly can help allay anxieties, improve your outlook, or simply provide an alternative perspective.

When we talk about mental health, we show others they're not alone – and that we're here to help. Simple conversations around mental health can:

- Offer reassurance and emotional support.
- Encourage individuals to seek support or professional help.
- Promote healthier coping strategies.
- Strengthen relationships and increase understanding.

Also, discussions around mental wellbeing don't need to only focus on the negative. People often think that discussions around mental health are challenging and difficult, but it is equally important to celebrate and maintain progress and success. For instance, if you've struggled in the past but you are now coping better, don't be afraid to share what worked for you – such as breathing techniques, lifestyle changes, or coping mechanisms.

How to Start a Conversation Around Mental Health

Starting a conversation about mental health may feel daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some tips to help you have open and productive conversations.

1. **Just Listen:** Sometimes, the best way to start a conversation is simply to listen. People might not want advice or guidance – but simply to feel heard and understood. Listening, particularly active listening, is a great way to start a conversation about mental health.
2. **Be Open and Honest:** Share your own feelings and experiences. Trust is a two-way street, and being open about your own mental health can help others feel more comfortable doing the same.
3. **Ask Simple Questions:** Simple, non-judgmental questions such as “How have you been feeling lately?” can create space for meaningful dialogue, without making them feel bad or guilty.
4. **Check In Regularly:** Mental health isn't a one-time conversation. Regular check-ins can ensure people feel supported long-term.

Getting Support

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, there are many resources available:

- Helplines like Samaritans (116 123) can offer confidential, professional support.
- Mental health professionals such as counsellors, therapists, and psychiatrists can provide expert care.
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) may offer support for workplace-related stress or mental health issues.
- Local community groups often provide peer support and a safe space to talk.

Remember, mental health is just as important as physical health, and looking after both is crucial. Time to Talk Day is a reminder that we all have a role to play in supporting each other's mental wellbeing.

Let's make Time to Talk Day a turning point in starting honest, supportive conversations about mental health. Whether it's with a friend, colleague, or family member, talking can create real change.

Heart Health: tips to improve your heart

Your heart is one of the hardest-working organs in your body. Taking care of your heart is essential not only for your cardiovascular health – but also for your overall wellbeing. With the right lifestyle habits, you can help prevent heart disease, improve your heart function, and lead a healthier life.

In the UK, millions of people are affected by heart and circulatory diseases. They cause a quarter of all deaths in the UK, and heart disease is one of the leading causes of death worldwide.

The good news is that many types of heart disease are preventable through healthy lifestyle choices. By making small, consistent changes, you can significantly reduce your risk and keep your heart in top condition.





As such, here are some tips for improving your heart health:

1. Stay Active

Regular physical activity is great for your heart, improves circulation, and helps you to maintain a healthy weight. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming.

Alternatively, you could engage in 75 minutes of vigorous activity, such as running or aerobic classes. If you're just starting, any movement is better than none, so start slow and build up to these targets gradually.

It is a common misconception that only cardio is good for your heart. However, strength & resistance training has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease – so don't be afraid to pick up the weights as well!

2. Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

A balanced diet is crucial for maintaining healthy cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and weight – all key factors in preventing heart disease. There is often a focus on what we shouldn't be eating – such as processed meats, high sugar foods, and saturated fats, which can have a negative impact on our cholesterol levels. But what should we be eating?

- **Unsaturated fats:** These can be found in avocados, vegetable oils, and seeds. Consuming unsaturated fats can have a beneficial effect on your cholesterol levels.
- **Nuts:** Nuts contain a powerful mixture of unsaturated fat, protein, fibre, and antioxidants. Research has shown that eating a small handful of nuts each day can reduce the risk of heart attack and heart disease. Try to avoid salted varieties though!
- **Oily fish:** Oily fish such as salmon and mackerel are a treasure trove of vitamins, unsaturated fats, and omega-3, which are great for protecting your heart health. Try to replace processed meats such as sausages or burgers with a portion of this instead.
- **Wholegrain carbs:** We often eat a lot of bread, rice, and pasta, but switching to wholegrain or seeded varieties can help us to get more fibre into our diet – which can lower your risk of heart disease.



3. Maintain a Healthy Weight

Carrying excess weight, especially around your abdomen, increases your risk for heart disease and high blood pressure. Aim for a balanced approach to weight management through a combination of healthy eating and regular physical activity. If you're looking to lose weight, aim for gradual, sustainable changes rather than quick fixes or extreme solutions. Even small reductions in weight can significantly improve heart health and lower your risk of cardiovascular issues.

4. Manage Stress Effectively

Chronic stress can take a toll on your heart by raising blood pressure, contributing to inflammation, and increasing the likelihood of unhealthy behaviours like overeating or smoking. Managing stress is vital for heart health. Try incorporating relaxation techniques into your routine, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, yoga, or journaling. Taking breaks throughout the day and engaging in activities that bring you joy can also help reduce stress levels and improve your overall wellbeing.

5. Don't Forget Regular Health Check-Ups

Whilst all these things will help to reduce your risk of heart disease, regular check-ups with your healthcare provider are essential for catching potential heart health issues early. Be sure to monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar levels, especially if you have a family history of heart disease. Regular screenings can help identify any risk factors, allowing you and your doctor to take proactive steps to manage them.

Heart disease may be a leading cause of death, but the good news is that by taking proactive steps now, you can significantly reduce your risk levels. By staying active, eating a healthy diet, and managing your health effectively, you're not just improving your heart health – you're improving your overall quality of life. Your heart will thank you for the effort in the long run!

Getting back on track with exercise: top tips to make it stick

As February rolls around, many of us find ourselves slipping away from those ambitious New Year's resolutions. We started strong with intentions of working out regularly, but somewhere, life got in the way. Whether it's a busy schedule, lack of motivation, or a simple case of getting discouraged, it's easy to fall off the exercise wagon.

However, it's never too late to get back on track – and make exercise a lasting, enjoyable part of your routine.





Here are some strategies to help you re-commit to your fitness goals and build a lasting habit:

1. Start Small, Stay Consistent

Rather than aiming for an hour-long workout every single day, begin with short, manageable sessions, and incorporate rest days into your routine. Try 10 to 20 minutes and aim for consistency instead of intensity. Studies show that small, regular doses of exercise can be more sustainable than overloading yourself at the start, which can be demotivating and lead to an increased risk of injury. As you build the habit, you'll naturally find yourself increasing your workout time.

2. No Pain, No Gain – Don't Be Disheartened By DOMS

Many people who are new to or returning to exercise will experience DOMS – Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness – which typically starts 1-2 days following your workout. This is a normal response to new or increased physical activity, especially strength training.

While it can be uncomfortable, DOMS is a sign that your muscles are adapting and getting stronger. To ease the discomfort, focus on gentle stretching, hydration, and rest. Don't be discouraged by the soreness; it's a part of the process and usually decreases as your body gets used to your new routine.

3. Make It Enjoyable

Exercise shouldn't feel like a punishment. If you're struggling to enjoy your workouts, try experimenting with different activities that you find more fun. Dance, team sports, yoga, or even a brisk walk in the fresh air can be just as effective as more traditional exercises. Find what excites you, and the motivation will follow. When you enjoy what you're doing, you're more likely to stick with it.

4. Set Realistic Goals

Setting goals is important for motivation, but you need to make sure that you can achieve them. Start with goals that are more easily attainable, such as exercising three times a week for 20 minutes, or hitting a specific number of steps each day. As you hit these milestones, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment that encourages you to keep going.

5. Incorporate Variety

Doing the same thing every day can get monotonous. Spice things up by mixing different types of exercise into your routine – for instance, strength training one day, HIIT cardio the next, or a bootcamp-style class the next. A varied approach keeps workouts interesting, reduces the risk of injury through overuse of the same muscle groups, and ensures you're improving your strength across your whole body.



6. Track Your Progress

Nothing feels more rewarding than seeing progress, no matter how small. Whether it's tracking your workouts in a journal, taking pictures in the mirror to visualise your progress, or simply noting improvements in your energy levels, keeping track can motivate you to keep going. Celebrate your successes, no matter how minor they may seem – they add up!



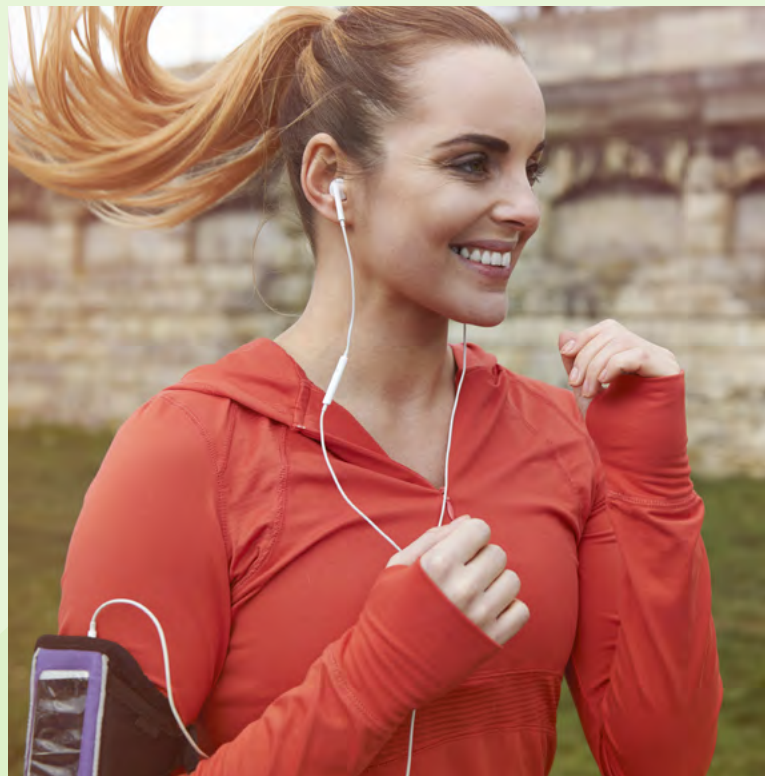
7. Make It a Social Activity

Find a workout buddy or join a group activity to make exercise feel less like a solo task. Working out alone can be daunting, and especially difficult when you're not in the mood for it. Having a social expectation to attend, or a partner to keep you accountable can be a great way to exercise even when you might not feel like it. Plus, exercising with others is a fantastic way to make new friends! Whether it's a fitness class or a weekend hike with a mate, you'll be more likely to stick with it when you're not alone.



8. Listen to Your Body

Remember, it's important to respect your body's limits. It's easy to push too hard when you're motivated and full of energy at the beginning, but overdoing it can lead to burnout, or worse – injury, which can prevent you from exercising at all. If you feel pain or fatigue that doesn't feel right, take a break and rest. Giving your body time to recover is just as essential as the exercise itself – over-exercising can have the opposite effect on your fitness levels and gains.



9. Create a Routine

Consistency is key. Try to schedule your workouts at the same time each day or week. Having a set routine, like exercising first thing in the morning or right after work, helps you establish a habit. Over time, it will become second nature and part of your regular routine – just like brushing your teeth. It'd feel wrong to not do it!

10. Focus on the Benefits, Not Just the Effort

Instead of viewing exercise as something to power through, focus on the positive impacts it has on your life. Whether it's more energy, better sleep, improved mood, or reduced stress, regular exercise has wide-reaching benefits beyond physical health. Keeping these advantages in mind can help you stay motivated on days when you feel like skipping a workout.

11. Be Kind to Yourself

Lastly, be patient and kind with yourself. Everyone has slip-ups – what matters is that you keep going and get back on track. Don't be too hard on yourself if you miss a workout or if you're not seeing immediate improvements. Progress, not perfection, is the goal.

Getting into and sticking with exercise can be challenging, but by starting small and staying consistent, you'll start to see real progress on your fitness journey. So, if your New Year's resolutions are starting to fade away, don't worry – there's always a chance to reset. Start fresh, and let February be the month you rediscover the joys of exercise!

World Cancer Day: A global movement for awareness, prevention, and support

Every year on the 4th of February, the world unites to observe **World Cancer Day** – dedicated to raising cancer awareness and showing support for all of those affected by the disease.

Organised by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)**, WCD2025 brings together individuals, communities, and organisations to highlight the impact of cancer and to drive meaningful action towards beating cancer.

Starting this year, the new theme of World Cancer Day is **“United by Unique.”** Running from 2025–2027, this campaign is centred around the fact that every experience with cancer is unique, and that it will take all of us to come together to improve cancer care and facilitate change.

Tailored towards individuals and communities, this campaign looks beyond the disease and to the patient themselves – and promotes a people-centred approach to cancer care in order to deliver the best health outcomes.

As such, here are some ways that you can support World Cancer Day 2025.



How You Can Get Involved

There are many ways you can contribute to the mission of World Cancer Day. No matter who you are, there are many ways that you can make a difference:



Spread the Word

Awareness is key in the fight against cancer. Share educational resources with your friends and colleagues about the importance of early detection, lifestyle choices, and supporting cancer research. Use social media to amplify your message and encourage others to get involved.

Host a Fundraising Event

Whether it's a charity auction, bake sale, or quiz night, hosting an event can be a fun and engaging way to help raise funds and awareness. Even if it's at home, work, or even virtually, every donation makes a difference, no matter how small.

Volunteering

Sometimes, the best donation you can make is your time. Look at cancer charities, support groups, or events where you could lend a hand. Many charities rely on volunteers to keep their services running smoothly.

Join a Charity Run

Participating in a charity run, walk, or challenge is a brilliant way to raise funds – and it keeps you active too! Many charities organise these events throughout the year, so keep an eye out for them if you're looking to raise funds and kick-start your fitness journey. You could even organise your own!

Take Part in Awareness Days

World Cancer Day is not the only awareness day for cancer, and many specific cancers have their own themes and days throughout the year. Consider wearing a ribbon or a specific colour – such as pink for breast cancer. By simply wearing the colour, you can spark conversations and help to raise awareness.



World Cancer Day is more than just a day of awareness – it's an opportunity to take action and create real change in the fight against cancer. By coming together to raise awareness, promote prevention, and support research, we can help ensure that more people survive cancer and lead healthier lives. Together, we can make a real difference.

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Corporate Training Solutions

From impactful training courses and critical incident support to essential supervision, coaching, and mediation services, our Preventative Services have consistently demonstrated a substantial reduction in absenteeism, improved performance, and heightened engagement. Employees frequently report feeling valued by their employers, showcasing the efficacy of our preventative services.

Annually, we successfully deliver thousands of workshops, webinars and supervision sessions covering a broad spectrum of mental health topics.

We have a team of specialists ready to discuss your requirements and provide a solution that suits your wellbeing strategy.



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