



EAP Newsletter

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Mental wellbeing and worry

This month we talk about managing your own mental health, the power of talking, children's mental health and the importance of building resilience.

Managing your own mental health

Are you familiar with this phrase: "The most important relationship we can have is the one we have with ourselves"?

Although it may sound like a self-indulgent cliché, there's actually a lot of truth in it.

As life's challenges and the cost of living crisis continue to put us under increased stress we must remember to prioritise our own mental wellbeing. It's time to give yourself the same kind of love and kindness you'd give to others.

How you can benefit from self-compassion



Lower anxiety and worry

Ensuring you feel secure and strong is really important in times of uncertainty. Practising self-compassion can reduce anxiety and help you to build an inner sense of safety and control.



Reduce stress levels

Continuous, heightened stress levels can wreak havoc with your mind, body and overall health. Yes, stress is a part of life but it's important to keep it under control.



Boost 'happy hormones'

Managing your own mental health and practising self-compassion can increase the levels of the happy hormones - dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin - in your body.



Increase compassion for others

Taking time to manage your own mental health isn't just good for you, it can help others' around you, too. The stronger you feel, the better placed you are to support other people.

Seven ways to prioritise your own mental health

1

Get regular exercise: Try to integrate exercise into your daily routine. Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your overall health.

2

Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated: Nutrition can directly affect our mental and emotional wellbeing. Eating regularly and opting for foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady.

3

Make sleep a priority: Without sleep, it's impossible to function effectively. Sufficient sleep (especially REM sleep) helps the brain to process emotional information.

4

Spend time in nature: There's a growing body of evidence that highlights the huge benefits of a human-nature connection, including reduced blood pressure and muscle tension, and happiness and life satisfaction. Try sky-gazing - sit back and look up at the sky for a few, undisturbed minutes every day - a walk in the woods or sit and watch the birds outside. If you're short on time, wrap up warm and take your morning tea or coffee outside and breathe in the fresh air.

5

Practise gratitude: Gratitude is consistently associated with higher levels of happiness. You can practise self-gratitude by doing things such as journaling, meditating on the positive aspects of your life or praying. You can also practise gratitude for others by telling someone you're grateful for something they've done or doing something kind to express your thanks.

6

Eliminate negative self-talk: Thinking positively may help you to cope better with worries and stressful situations. In turn, this reduces the impact of stress on your body. It's also thought that those who are more optimistic tend to live healthier lives.

7

Stay connected: Social connections help to promote positive mental health and give your life meaning. Reach out to family, friends and neighbours. Getting involved in your community can provide you with a sense of belonging and can add meaning and purpose to your life.

Try this today. Start a gratitude jar.

Think of one or two things each day that you're grateful for. It can be something benign like your morning coffee or as big as your love for a family member or friend. Write down the thing you are grateful for and pop it in the jar. Over time, you'll find you have a jar full of reasons to be thankful. It's a great way to cultivate a practise of expressing thanks.



The power of talking

February 2nd marks **Time to Talk Day** - an annual campaign to end mental health stigma and discrimination.

Talking about mental health can feel difficult and it can be uncomfortable for many of us with mental health problems to reach out. But the small act of talking can make a big difference to someone suffering.

There is no right or wrong way to talk about mental health. However, these tips will help guide you in how to talk to someone in a helpful way.

How to help someone talk about their feelings and emotions



Think about the location

When you talk to a person experiencing mental health problems, it may be easier for them to talk side by side or whilst you're doing an activity. Consider talking to the person whilst walking or doing a puzzle together, instead of face to face which can feel overwhelming. If the person still feels unable to talk, you could suggest they write their thoughts down on paper for you to read instead.



Ask open-ended questions

Avoid closed questions that spark a yes or no response. Instead, opt for open, not leading questions, such as "how do you feel about that?", "how is this affecting you?" or "what can I do to help you?"



Be patient and listen

Not everyone will be ready to talk about their feelings and that's OK. Although you may find it unnatural, allow for silences in the conversation and be patient. Reassure the person there is no judgement and you will be there for them when they are ready to talk.



Do not try to fix the person's problem

Try to resist the urge to fix the person's mental health problem. The best thing you can do in the moment is be present and listen. Your emotional support is really important to that person.



Help in other ways

If the person is not ready to talk, there are other ways you can support them. Help in practical ways such as picking up their food shop or cleaning their home.

Try this today.
Make space in your day to process your own thoughts.

It's just as important to look after your own mental health as it is to support others. Even if it's just for a few minutes, mark out some time in the day for yourself to process your thoughts, feelings or practise a short and simple breathing exercise.



Children's mental health

Children's Mental Health Week takes place between 6th -12th February. Given how vital connection is for our wellbeing, the chosen theme for this year is Let's Connect. It's all about making meaningful, healthy connections during the awareness week and beyond.

Three important statistics* about children's mental health

1 in 6

children aged five-16 were identified as having a probable mental health problem. That's five children in every classroom.

83%

of young people with mental health needs agreed that COVID-19 had made their mental health worse.

1 in 3

mental health problems in adulthood are directly connected to an adverse childhood experience.

*YoungMinds.org



Four simple ways to better connect with your young person

1

Embrace 'traditional' activities : The online world is an everyday part of young peoples' lives. But research shows that teenagers who spend more time on social media can feel more isolated. Help to reduce the time your child spends on social media with activities like hiking, sports, baking, and board games. It's hard to be online and doing an activity, and this will help to limit their screen time, too.

2

Be curious about your child's world: It can be all too easy to dismiss the things that our kids are interested in. But finding a common ground and speaking to children on their level can help improve connection. Ask them if you can help stage their next TikTok video, set up a sleepover den together for their friends or hold a family film club where you watch then talk about their favourite films.

3

Give children and teenagers your full attention: When you encourage your child to talk, it's really important to ensure you actively listen. Put down your phone or laptop, stop what you're doing, physically get onto your child's level and repeat back what they say to reassure them you hear what they're saying.

4

Join community events or classes: Take part in community activities with your children such as a fundraiser, fun run or the community choir. Not only will this quality time together help you connect with each other, it will also give yourself and your family the opportunity to connect with others.

Try this today. If you or your young person needs extra support, reach out.

Know that help is out there:

Young Minds provides advice about mental health and behaviour problems in children and young people up to the age of 25. You can call the Parents' and Carers' Helpline on 0808 802 5544.

Shout provides free, confidential support, 24/7 via text for anyone in crisis, anytime, anywhere. Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer.

The Mix provides a free, confidential helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem. You can call 0808 808 4994 for free.

Contact your GP practice to arrange an appointment. Mental health conditions may require the help of a medical professional.



The importance of building resilience

Have you ever wondered why some people appear to stay calm and collected in the face of adversity while others crumble? In large part, how we cope with life's challenges comes down to how resilient we are.

But what does being resilient actually mean and how do we achieve it in a practical sense?

Three questions about resilience, answered

What does it mean to be resilient?

Resilience means being able to adapt to life's difficult situations, misfortunes and setbacks. Having resilience does not prevent problems from happening, but it does mean you are able to feel negative emotions such as sadness and anger, whilst still functioning both physically and psychologically.

There are many factors that determine resilience, including genetics and your early life experiences.

How do you know if you're resilient?

A good question to ask yourself is:

When something's gone wrong or you've felt challenged, do you tend to bounce back or do you feel stuck in a sense of overwhelm?

People who are able to create a healthy level of resilience tend to rebound from a setback or challenge. Whereas people that lack resilience tend to dwell on problems or turn to unhealthy habits and coping mechanisms.

Know that everyone is different and there is no right or wrong level of resilience.

Can you improve your level of resilience?

In short, yes. There are steps you can take to improve your level of resilience. Let's take a closer look at just five of the things you can do:

1

Develop and maintain strong, trusting relationships: It's important you have people you can confide in and lean on for support and guidance in tough times.

2

Change how you respond to situations: Look back on the challenges you've been confronted with in the past and identify positive and negative behaviour patterns. How did you feel, how did you cope? Turn these setbacks into opportunities for growth.

3

Maintain a healthy perspective: People with a negative perspective tend to judge themselves too harshly, worry more and are often misguided by their views. But when they have a healthy perspective, they tend to gauge situations more accurately.

4

Practise self care: In challenging times, it's important to take care of yourself. Eat routinely, get outside, move your body, practise self-compassion, keep in touch with friends and spend a little time each day doing something you enjoy.

5

Help others: Evidence shows that helping others can help improve our mental health and resilience. Good deeds can reduce stress, boost self esteem and improve mood. And they needn't cost money or take too much time.

Try this today.
Practise mindfulness, even if it's just for ten minutes.

Practising mindfulness, even if it's just for a short time, can help to bring us into the present moment. It can be an effective way to deal with negative emotions when they arise. Mindfulness guides are easy to access online and on your mobile. Simply search for "mindfulness" on the music or podcast app you use.

And finally, our tip of the month; the one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

Spend as much time in daylight as possible. The days are starting to get longer and spring is on the horizon. But for now, we have to work a little harder to get the much-needed daylight we need. If you're working from home and it's possible to, put your desk near a window, draw the curtains or blinds as far as they'll go and give those windows a good clean down so daylight can seep through. Schedule a break into your day, wrap up warm and take yourself outside.

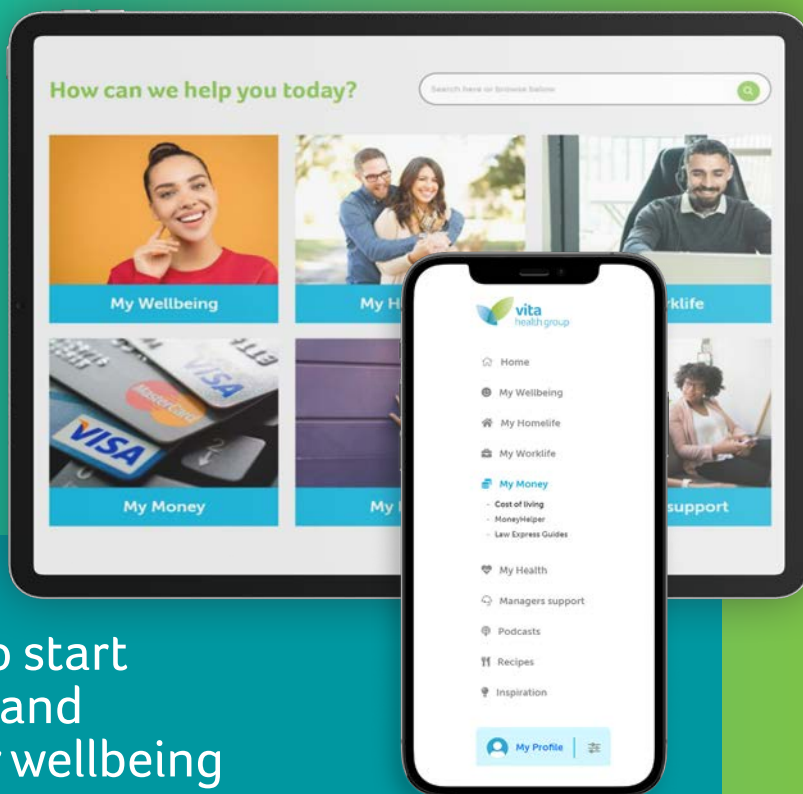
Daylight, fresh air and spending time outside benefit our mental health by triggering the brain to release the hormone serotonin - helping us to feel calm, boost our mood and reduce anxiety.

Wellbeing Hub

Helping you to manage the daily challenges of life and work

Your online digital health hub contains a range of guidance and practical advice to help you stay healthy.

Simply visit www.my-EAP.com and use the organisational code provided to access the site.



Scan the QR code today to start your journey and improve your wellbeing