

Tips to maintain the Five Ways to Well-being, when everything has suddenly changed

The outbreak and effects of coronavirus (COVID-19) can be stressful for us all. The fear and anxiety that surrounds disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in everyone, which can be tough to manage. It may be difficult, but coping with it will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

It's more important than ever, whether you are a keyworker, self-isolating or working from home during social distancing that you look after your mental health and well-being. For that, here are some tips as to how you can take the five steps to well-being at home.



The Five Ways to Well-being provide five key steps that you can take as your mental 'five-a-day' to contribute to your overall well-being. These steps remind us to:

- **Connect**
- **Be Active**
- **Take Notice**
- **Keep Learning**
- **Give**

Don't worry, we know there are restrictions in place, that's why there are lots of creative ideas for each step, will you take them on?

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Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work or in your local community. Think of these relationships as the cornerstones of your life and spend time developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day. Of course, physical connections are hard to make right now, recently, it seems impossible to escape the news, health updates are important but take some time off scrolling and use your technology to connect! Check in with your friends and family more than usual over the phone, video chat or message. See how their day is going; you could even have a digital coffee break with a friend or work buddy! For something more interactive, use a video chat app like House Party to include a group of friends, here you can find out who in the group is the quiz master in trivia or rock out with some karaoke! If you need some time on your own given the public health stress, reflect, spend some time doing what you enjoy. Connect with your mind and body, try some mindfulness and stay in touch with how you are feeling, you're more important than the lunchtime news.

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Be Active, whether you prefer walking or running, cycling, playing a game, gardening or dancing. Exercising makes you feel good. Find something you enjoy, dedicate time to do it (start with 10 minutes at a time) and work up to 30 minutes of physical activity for the day! It's encouraged that during social distancing, everyone gets outside for at least one form of exercise a day, it's great for your mind! This can be whatever you enjoy, get outside, feel the wind in your hair and sweat out some stress. Find some home workouts on YouTube, share these with your friends online and check in afterwards for a post-workout chat. You could even use this as a chance to set yourself a challenge like the Couch to 5K or try something new like cycling or yoga – you'll be amazed what your body can do for your mind!



Take Notice, stop, pause, and take a moment to look around you now. What can you see, feel, smell or even taste? Look for beautiful, new, unusual or extraordinary things in your everyday life and think about how that makes you feel without judging or trying to change them. Take a few deep breaths, feel the rising and falling of your chest, and take notice of the chair under you or the weight of your feet on the floor. 'Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, when one only remembers to turn on the light' – J.K Rowling. It may feel like all there is to notice is worrying news regarding public health, staying mindful and bringing your mind to the present moment is good for your mental well-being. Try apps like Headspace and Calm for guided meditations, you'll learn how to notice and release tension you didn't even realise you were carrying! Sit in your garden or go for walks with those you live with, notice nature, the birds singing and the sound of life – it's still there and will still be there once we get through this together.

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Keep Learning, many people are afraid to try something new, but haven't you heard - variety is the spice of life. If you keep learning new things, it will make you more confident, will be enjoyable, will boost your self-esteem and improve your overall well-being. In the current COVID-19 restrictions, our focus has moved from normal everyday goals we had, to looking after our work, mental health and encouraging self-development through hobbies. Use any spare time to unwind, start to learn a skill you were putting off – cook, learn a new language or exercise. Try the Duolingo app for some free and fun language practice, BBC good food's website is packed with recipes and there are a whole host of free podcasts out there just waiting to be listened to. If you enjoy a good book, World Book Online have just released 3000 ebooks and audiobooks for free, you can also download ebooks from Libraries NI; it's an opportunity to work and play, if you make it one.



Give, look outward as well as inward. Linking yourself and your happiness to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you, even if you can't physically be there! Giving can be something as simple as increasing awareness on social distancing and encouraging the people in your life to stay at home. Use social media in a positive way to share messages of appreciation for those working and dealing with the virus as part of their work. Give a friend, older relative or someone living on their own a call or text, it might just make their day to know that someone is thinking of them during this tough time apart. Give a random act of kindness, deliver groceries or medicine for someone that you know can't leave the house, just make sure to follow social distance guidelines on this one! Lastly, give yourself a hug, you can only do so much and you're doing the best you can, make sure to love yourself, you can't pour from an empty cup, give yourself time to relax and think of all the things you can look forward to – plan these with your family and friends!

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Well there you have it, that's how to get your mental five-a-day. It may be harder during COVID-19 restrictions, but it is possible and more important than ever before! Give it a go and see how many you can get – make sure to share this with a work buddy or friend and start your journey to better well-being, today!

*The Five Ways to Well-being was developed by the New Economics Foundation. It is a set of evidence-based actions designed to improve personal well-being.

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AMH Works provide a range of programmes which support employers to improve mental and emotional well-being in the workplace and create Healthy, Resilient Workplaces, to find out more contact AMH Works Manager, Shelly Wilson on **07540124083** or **swilson@amh.org.uk**

There may be times when you need extra support. If you're finding things really difficult you might want to speak to your line manager, a GP, Lifeline or Samaritans. **Further information on sources of support are available on www.amh.org.uk**

