



Looking after yourself

A handful of ideas to support feeling good



Introduction

We all struggle at some point in our lives. Bad things happen, people are rude to us, we haven't got enough money, and relationships go down the pan. But in the end we need to deal with these "bits of life" and not beat ourselves up. Life happens and it can be great but it also can be a struggle. At Care to Talk we want to give you as much help as possible to not just get back on track but to be happy. So below is our advice. It's not comprehensive and some stuff might not work for you but try it! Our evidence is that a combination of these approaches do work. Don't sit at home watching Cash in the Attic (we've all done it). Go out. Walk in the park. Ring or text a friend for a quick coffee.

Regular Exercise: Physical activity has been linked to improved mood and reduced stress. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Be the 2% that use the stairs and not the escalator (yes given the choice 98% use an escalator)

Healthy Eating: Maintain a balanced diet with a variety of nutrients. Nutrient-rich foods can positively impact your mood and overall well-being. We know this is hard on a budget but think apple not chips. Buy a water bottle, often feelings of hunger are simply thirst. Resist the Pot Noodle!

Adequate Sleep: Ensure you get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can contribute to stress and mental health issues. If you are an insomniac or struggle getting to sleep; stop watching late-night horror movies, switch your phone off, try mindfulness and above all don't booze or drink coffee.

Stress Management: Develop effective stress management techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or mindfulness. These practices can help calm the mind and reduce stress. There are plenty of apps that can help you with this. It works. Even just sitting still for five minutes can massively help your mental health and chill you out.

Social Connections: Maintain healthy relationships and connect with friends and family. Social support is crucial for mental well-being. Cutting yourself off is not helpful. Okay there may be family or people at work you don't get on with so don't force the issue. But go for a coffee or if you have a friend with a dog go for a walk in the park.

Set Realistic Goals: Break down tasks into smaller, achievable goals. Accomplishing small goals can boost your confidence and motivation. It's tempting to make huge lists of places to visit, books to read, miles run Constantly measuring what we do. Keep it simple. Read one book. Go for a 10 minute run. You don't have to do a marathon.

Limit Screen Time: Reduce exposure to negative news and social media, and be mindful of your screen time. Excessive use of digital devices can impact mental health. A recent report from the US had people spending on average 15 hours a day engaging with digital media, phones, TV and the internet. Stop. Switch these things off. Mobile phones and the internet can be helpful and keep you in touch with people but having them on 24/7 is invasive.

Mindfulness and Meditation: Practice mindfulness to stay present and focused. Meditation can help reduce anxiety and improve overall mental well-being. It works. It's not tree-hugging, hippy mumbo jumbo as it's been proven to make many, many people feel better. Mindfulness and meditation is about rising above that noise or traffic of life for a few minutes and if done regularly can make you feel calmer.

Seek Professional Help: If you're struggling with mental health, don't hesitate to seek support from a mental health professional. Therapists, counsellors, and psychiatrists can provide valuable assistance. Many groups offer free support ([link](#))

Maintain Hobbies: Engage in activities you enjoy. Hobbies can provide a sense of accomplishment and pleasure. Make stuff. Our brains are creative and need stimulation. It could be a pottery course or drawing. It could be walking in the Dales. Or take up birdwatching. Again don't just sit at home watching Homes under the Hammer. That's not a hobby!

Limit Substance Use: Be mindful of alcohol and drug consumption, as they can negatively affect mental health. If you have concerns about substance use, seek help. Again many groups can help with this but if you are worried about excessive

consumption speak to your GP. They've seen it all before and although it's an adage, a problem shared is a problem halved.

Learn to Say No: Don't overcommit yourself. Learn to say no when necessary to avoid unnecessary stress. You might have family members or friends always asking you to "do stuff". Be polite and think about your time. You might be the default babysitter or taxi. But think about all the stuff above. It can be hard but sometimes you just need to slow down.

Remember that everyone is different, and what works for one person may not work for another. It's essential to find a combination of strategies that work best for you. If your mental health concerns persist, consult with a healthcare professional for personalized advice and support.

The very act of trying things can help. Writing, reading, going for walks, chatting with friends, making bread all these things are really positive. What you don't want to do is sit on your own dwelling on the bad things in life.