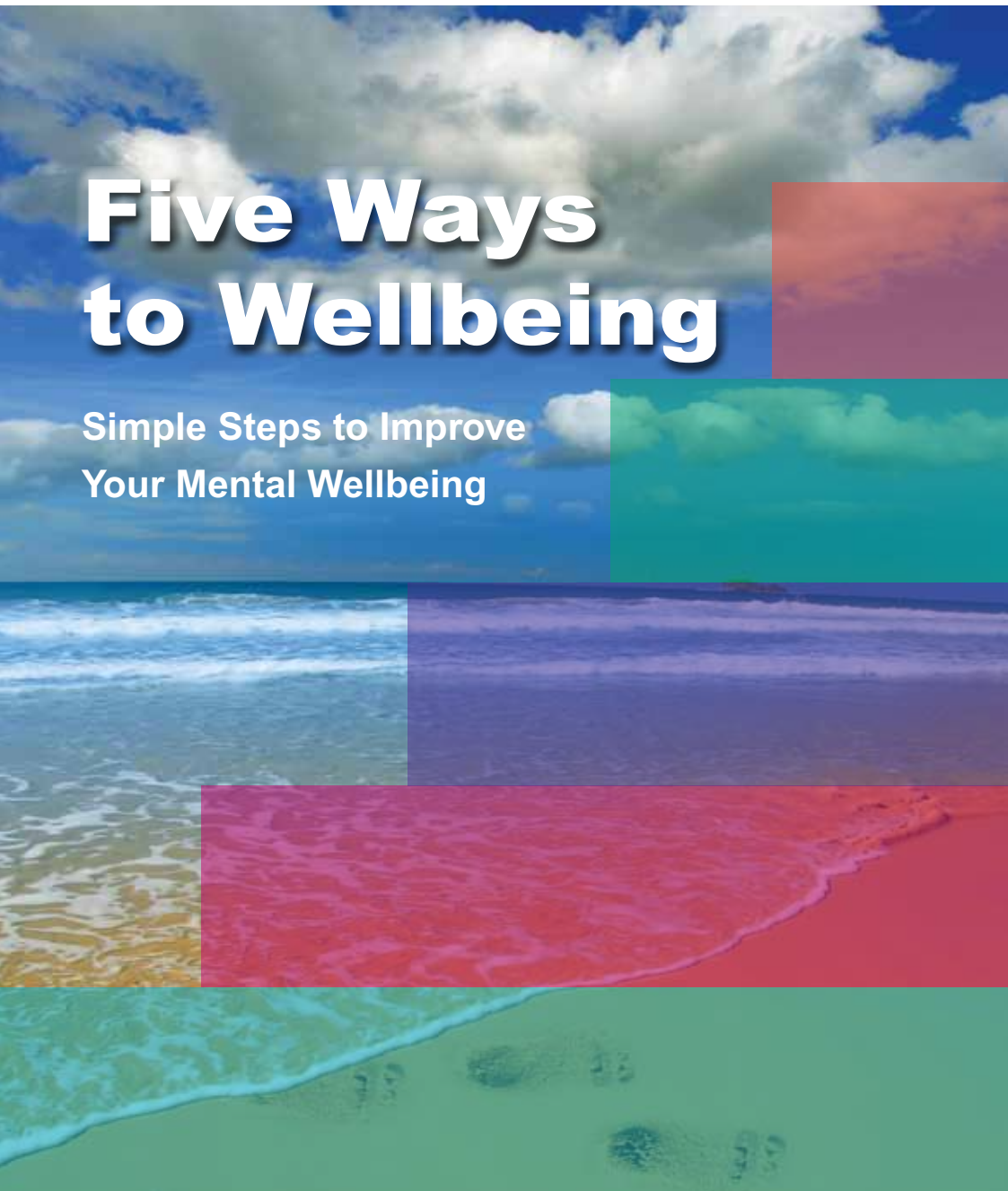


# Five Ways to Wellbeing

Simple Steps to Improve  
Your Mental Wellbeing





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# Five Ways to Wellbeing



## 5 Steps Towards Living Well

### Take Small Steps to Improve Your Mental Wellbeing

#### Introduction

We all have a sense of when we are mentally and physically well. But sometimes we need extra support or a gentle nudge to look after ourselves so that we keep well.

The New Economics Foundation has assessed the latest scientific evidence and created a set of simple actions to improve wellbeing in every day life.

By adopting the **Five Ways to Wellbeing** you can increase your life expectancy by up to 7.5 years. With one in four people today experiencing mental distress during their lifetime, there's never been a better time for you to take responsibility for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.

#### So what are the Five Ways?

The **Five Ways to Wellbeing** are evidence based ways to help you improve your mental wellbeing. Try to integrate them into your daily life – think of them as your “5 a day” for mental wellbeing!



# Five Ways to Wellbeing

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## 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 with support and enrich you every day.

## 2. Be Active

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

## 3. Take Notice

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

## 4. Keep Learning

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

## 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, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

# Building the ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ into a Healthy Lifestyle

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*‘You are what you repeatedly do.  
Excellence, then is not an act, but a habit’*

*Aristotle*

The **Five Ways to Wellbeing** were designed as a mental health equivalent to the dietary advice to have ‘5 a day’ fruit and vegetables for physical health. The ‘5 ways’ are based on an extensive review of the actions people can take that are positively associated with mental health and wellbeing. In effect they describe some of the key components of a healthy emotional or social ‘diet’. All five of these suggestions are free, easily achievable and applicable to anyone’s life regardless of their circumstances. Many of us will already be doing some of the ‘5 ways’ some of the time without even being aware of it.

Hence this may come across as common sense. However, 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 ‘5 ways’ to focus on what we are doing least of so as we can put extra effort into these areas and gain a better balance in our lives. 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 sustain changes. We know that we will not get fit just going to the gym once or twice. We need to keep exercising.

We won’t have a healthy diet by incorporating the ‘5 a day’ fruit and veg for just a couple of weeks. Similarly the power and value of this simple concept lies in finding ways that work for us, consistently taking action and noticing the difference. It then 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.





**give**

**keep learning**

**take notice**

**be active**

**connect**



*“You can’t stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.”*

*A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh*

## **Being connected is associated with good mental health and wellbeing.**

When we talk about connecting, we usually think of connecting with other people. However, there are other ways of being in touch and connected that are also important:

- Connecting with self and having quiet moments
- Connecting with nature, pets or animals
- Connecting with God or one’s spiritual needs.

There are also important differences between making contact, connecting and colliding.

Sometimes connecting with people’s distress can leave us feeling challenged and drained and sometimes too many contacts can make us feel we are not properly connected to anyone.

If you are a carer or involved in a caring role, you may have lots of contact that relates to supporting others. This can lead to loss of contact with opportunities, people and things that support you.

As with all things in life a balance is needed. We should try and seek out ‘positive’ connections to balance time spent with distress.

By making choices and consciously attending to the connections we make, we can become more in control of our lives.

Take up the driving seat and become committed to living well.



# Questions to aid Connections

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1. How would you know if you were connecting or just making contact?

2. As being well connected is good for your mental wellbeing ...

- Is there anything you could be doing more of?

- Is there anything you could be doing less of?

3. Can you think of connections that you would like to make or remake?

# Be Active



**Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.**

*"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."*

*Michael Jordan*

## **People who are active have improved health and wellbeing.**

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 10 minutes of physical activity has been shown to be beneficial for mental wellbeing.

We need to consciously 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 more activities. The reality is that we all get 24 hours 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 more 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 may not have been that physically active. We can overcome mental fatigue by keeping in good shape physically. The key to this is committing to some form of physical activity as part of our daily routine.

Sometimes people feel guilty about taking a break from their work/role to do physical activity. Taking a break can be seen as wasting valuable time which could be spent doing what needs done.

In actual fact, when we take 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.

# Questions to aid being Active

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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?

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!)



# Take Notice

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

*“Beauty is everywhere, not everyone sees it.”*

*Confucius*

Taking notice, being aware and mindful is associated with good 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. More often than not, we focus on the various things that need to be sorted, project deadlines that need to be met, unpaid bills, the various phone calls we need to make, the appointments we need to keep etc. When we complete all the things on our to do list or our chores, we may then switch on the TV or read the paper. The contrary may also be true. We may not be doing much but we may be lost in our thoughts, focusing on all the things that are not working in our life – we can be busy doing nothing.

Most importantly we forget to take notice, to be aware and mindful of our surroundings, to be alert and awake rather than lost in thought or forgetful of where we are and what is happening around us.

To take notice is to pause, even 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 on around us, in our surroundings.

Remember, the value of taking action, doing something. Notice when we are connecting, notice when we are being active, notice when we are learning something new. Notice when we are giving. Choose to feel good about the action we are taking.

# Questions to aid Taking Notice

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1. If noticing enhances wellbeing, what opportunities can I take or make to take notice more often?

2. How can I practice slowing down and pausing more often?

3. What difference will incorporating this into my daily life make?

# Keep Learning



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

*“Develop a passion for learning, if you do you will never cease to grow.”  
Anthony J.D. Angelo*

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

It can be hard to feel motivated to learn all the time, especially if because of our work or other roles we are told we have to learn specific things whether we are interested in them or not, whether we value them or not. If this has been part of your experience and your interest in learning has been ‘spoiled’ it can be reconsidered and rediscovered. Engaging with the ‘5 ways’ is about learning what you can do to be more satisfied and fulfilled in your life and the very act of learning is part of that.

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 an obstacle. There is a huge difference between us saying, “I have to ... and I want to ...”

Learning new skills and practicing and refining old ones are key to both personal and professional growth. It keeps us interested and focused, breaking the monotony of life and opening us up to new possibilities.

We don’t necessarily have to sign up for a college course degree or complete a Masters’ degree, simple daily opportunities really count. We could learn how to cook a new recipe, play a new sport or find out about something we are curious about.

What we learn and how much effort we put into learning something new will be different for different people. As long as we pursue learning for our interest and gain satisfaction out of doing so, it will enhance our wellbeing.

# Questions to aid Learning

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1. What do I think about learning? Would I like to learn something new?

2. What would I like to learn about? What interests me? What do I value? What would I find useful?

3. What do I need to do to make learning something I look forward to?





**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, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.**

*“From what we get, we can make a living;  
What we give however, makes a life.”*

*Arthur Ashe*

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

Every relationship is one of give and take. The more we give the more we receive. 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 and make the other person feel good. When you are in the 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. There are many opportunities to give in small ways every day

For example:

- Giving a smile, a compliment, encouragement
- Giving a hand, giving way to another car
- Giving your time, a silent wish or prayer
- Give yourself the gift of connecting, of being active, of noticing
- Giving thanks, being grateful for whatever good is happening in your life.

Some people say that they find giving easy, but don't feel as comfortable to receive. This is especially true when it comes to receiving compliments. Giving is a two way process – your acceptance of what someone else gives is good for them as well as you. By becoming more comfortable with the give and take of everyday life we build ourselves up as well as give opportunities to others.

# Questions to aid Giving

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1. What do you give to others on a regular basis?

2. Do you notice what it's like for you when you give to others?

3. What else could you give others that you hadn't thought of before?  
What small actions/ gifts can you offer that you will feel good about?

4. What do you give yourself? How can you be more generous and appreciative to yourself?

# My Personal Journey

How have I done?	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Connect				
Take Notice				
Be Active				
Keep Learning				
Give				

# Sources of Support

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If you are in distress or despair call **Lifeline free on 0808 808 8000**

**Out of Hours GP - 028 3839 9201**

## Personal Support Network

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### Family Member/s

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

### Friend/s

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

### Community group(s)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

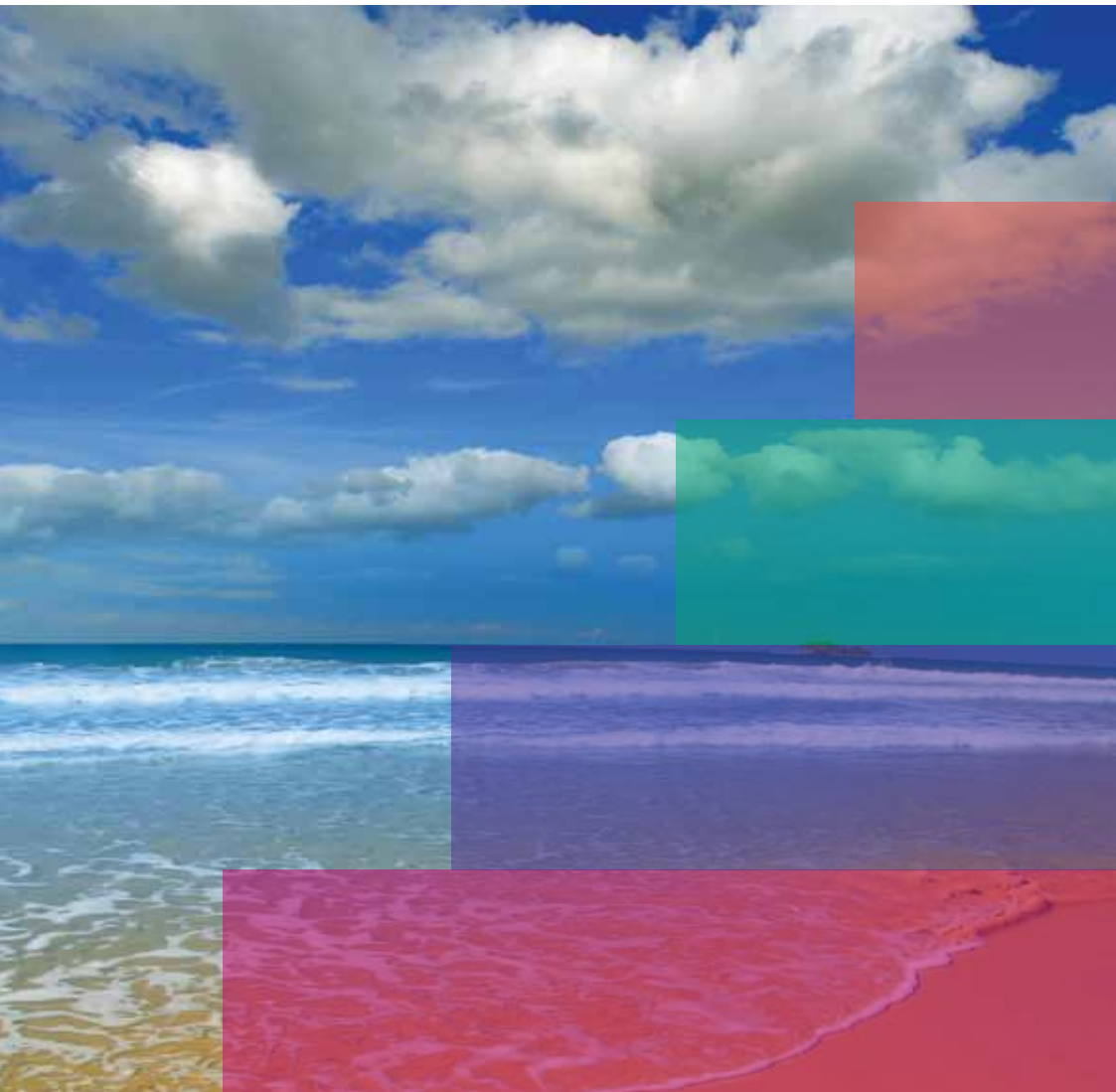
Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

**Hobbies** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



The information in this booklet has been adapted from:

- The Foresight Report - Five Ways to Wellbeing, New Economics Foundation 2008.
- Taking Steps to Living Well. A Personal Guide: the Five Ways to Wellbeing. Devon Partnership NHS Trust 2011.