



Top tips for looking after your own wellbeing



Start with simple breathing.

Make time for deep breathing as often as you remember. Breathing deeply has so many benefits -we take in more oxygen which travels around the bloodstream and nourishes our vital organs, including the brain; it settles the nervous system, engaging our parasympathetic nervous system that allows us to rest and digest, enabling us to be less emotionally reactive. Make time to breathe! See where it takes you...



Build up your support network.

We all need at least one person in our lives who looks out for us and is emotionally supportive. This support team can be made up of loved ones, your community centre, other parents, a sports club, colleagues, your cat even! They don't all have to be good listeners but they do need to be kind and caring towards you. Your brother might be good at DIY in your flat, someone else might be good at organising social events or baking cakes. How is your support network looking? What small step could you take to improve this? E.g. Saying hello to people with a smile. You are probably in someone else's support network. What qualities and traits do you offer? E.g. a listening ear, bad jokes...



Practice being relational

Children and young people are more likely to want to engage if they feel that you are interested in them as people. Take time to really get to know them. What are their passions? What are they looking forward to? What have they found challenging recently? Active listening builds connections and supports difficult feelings before they are acted out in behaviour.

Check in with your child when you know they are having a hard time.



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Incorporate exercise or movement into your daily routine.

We can't all get to the gym three evenings a week. Great if you can and even better if you play a team sport. But any small movement is helpful to our health and wellbeing. Get off the bus one stop early, walk a dog! (walking is more fun with a dog!) or simply dance around the room to a song you like.

Practise gratitude and patience.

Research has demonstrated that people who are grateful and patient are more likely to be happy and positive. Luckily these are qualities that we can develop with practice. Regular deep breathing or mindful meditation will help the nervous system calm down and you will become less reactive to emotional stimuli. Practicing gratitude will remind us to focus on the many positives we have rather than dwelling on the negative.

 Exercise: Every day write 3 things that you are grateful for. On bad days you may really struggle with this but it is even more important then. You might just be grateful to see the sky.

Get outside.

Even spending a few minutes in nature can work wonders for our mood. Sometimes it's great to leave your headphones at home and engage all your senses, take in your surroundings and notice what's going on in the natural world. If you have a garden, spend some time pottering, weeding, or thinking about what you might like to plant or grow next. Sometimes just watching the birds or bees come and go can help us feel more relaxed. Being present is something you can do anywhere, at any time, and it's free!



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Sleep well.

We all struggle to function if we haven't had a good night's sleep. Most of us will need about 8 hrs a night but this does vary from person to person. Stress can negatively affect our ability to fall asleep as our minds are busy with thoughts going round and round. Worry can take over in the dark hours too where we might stress about things that are not a concern once day breaks. When we are tired in the morning, we are more irritable and likely to make bad food choices to give us a spurt of energy. The occasional bad night is normal and for most people this is short-lived. Evening exercise or relaxation exercises can improve sleep in those circumstances, as can having a bedtime routine. Keep your bedroom just for sleep if you can, and leave your devices and screens at the door.



Try a new hobby or pursue a creative interest.

Perhaps you've always wanted to try writing poetry? Or maybe you enjoy singing in the shower but have never thought of taking it further? Dabbling in new things mixes up the routine as well as making us feel good. And we know that being creative has lasting positive effects on our mental health and wellbeing. So have a go at something different, and don't worry if you don't stick to it. You never know, you might discover a talent you never knew you had...



Pick up a book.

This may be one of the oldest tricks in the book (excuse the pun) but reading helps us escape and switch off from our busy lives. Unlike our phones which are full of an overwhelming amount of information, books allow us to focus our minds on one thing, whether that be a story about an unlikely romance, a gripping who-done-it true crime novel or a non-fiction book that teaches us about the amazing world we live in. "Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers." - Charles W. Eliot



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Be kind.

Above all else be kind to yourself and others. You never know what someone else is going through so give them and yourself the benefit of the doubt. We are all struggling to be happy, safe and healthy and life is not always easy.



Add your own thoughts of what helps you here to refer to when you need a boost:

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