

# Wellbeing & How to Achieve It

## What is Wellbeing?

One helpful definition of wellbeing is ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy’. Another is ‘a positive physical, social and mental state... It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, and that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society.’

Achieving personal wellbeing means taking action to improve your physical, mental and emotional health, leaving you feeling good about yourself and ready to face life's challenges.

This Bank Workers Charity Guide provides some guidance to help you achieve good wellbeing and directs you to further information and support for you.



## Contents

<b>Wellbeing &amp; How to Achieve It .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Physical Wellbeing .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mental Wellbeing .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Emotional Wellbeing .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Further Information .....</b>	<b>5</b>



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## Physical Wellbeing

### Eat Well

A healthy, balanced diet enables your brain and body to work efficiently. Making healthy choices about your diet also helps you feel well, lifts your self-esteem and boosts your energy levels.

The key to a balanced diet is to eat a variety of foods from each food group in the right proportions.

**Fruit and vegetables** - These should form a third of your daily diet, as part of every meal, and as snacks. You need at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Research suggests this helps to protect against cancer, obesity and heart disease.

**Bread, rice, potatoes and pasta** - These should also form a third of your diet and are the body's main source of energy. Choose wholegrain foods, which are rich in fibre and nutrients that reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

**Milk and dairy foods** - These should be eaten in moderation because of their high saturated fat content, but they are an important source of calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. Choose low-fat or reduced-fat versions.

**Meat, fish, eggs and beans** - These include animal and plant sources of protein, a major functional and structural component of all cells. Protein provides the body with 10 – 15% of its dietary energy, and is needed for growth and repair.

**Foods and drinks high in fat or sugar** - These foods should be eaten sparingly. Although they're an important energy source, they contain few nutrients and are high in saturated fat, trans-fatty acids, sugar and salt, increasing the risk of diseases.

### Keep Fit

Boosting your levels of daily activity can really improve your health and energy. Even moderate exercise releases chemicals in your brain that lift your mood.

It can help you to sleep better, have more energy, keep your heart healthy, and lose excess weight.

### How Much Exercise Do I Need?

Adults need to do at least 30 minutes of exercise, five days a week. It needs to be of at least moderate intensity, which means it makes you slightly breathless or a little warm. You do not have to do the whole 30 minutes in one go - it could be made up of three ten-minute bursts of activity spread through the day.

The activity can be as simple as walking to the shops or taking the dog out, or a more structured exercise or sport. If you are new to exercise, take small steps. Use the stairs instead of the lift at work, get off the bus one stop early and walk, or exercise with a friend.

### Which Exercise is Right for Me?

**Walking** - The simplest and cheapest way to exercise, it can greatly increase your fitness, improve the condition of your heart and lungs and work the muscles of the lower body.

**Running/jogging** - It is cheap, it can be done anywhere, anytime and it is very effective. All you need is a pair of running shoes and some enthusiasm, and you can set your own pace.

**Swimming** - A popular way to start getting fit because it is relatively inexpensive and needs even less kit than running. It is a great way to tone up and trim down.

**Cycling** - Good for you, as well as for the environment, it is a great alternative to taking the car. Benefits include a healthy heart and weight control.

A study of more than 10,000 people found those who cycle 20 miles a week are half as likely to have heart problems as those who do not cycle at all.

**Dance** - An aerobic activity that improves the condition of the heart and lungs, and requires muscular endurance and motor fitness. Suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

**Football** - Accessible to players of all standards through local football clubs. Leagues are organised through sports and social clubs, health clubs, sports centres, schools and pubs.



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**Gym** – Offers a range of aerobic exercise from using the running, rowing or cycling machines to weight training and classes such as yoga. For all ages and fitness levels.

## Limit Alcohol Intake

There is no need to give up alcohol completely to stay healthy, just stick to the recommended limit. For a man, that means not regularly drinking more than three to four units a day, and for a woman, not more than two to three units a day.

When times are hard, it is tempting to drink alcohol to numb painful feelings. But it can exaggerate some feelings and make you feel more angry, aggressive and depressed. If you think that your drinking might be becoming a problem, talk to your GP for advice.

## Get Enough Sleep

You need an average of seven to eight hours' sleep, as an adult, for your body and mind to rest fully. Some people need less and some need more to feel ready for the day. For some people, such as new parents or those working shifts, getting enough sleep is difficult. It might help to ask your partner or a family member to help you with some tasks, so you can catch up on sleep.

## Mental Wellbeing

## What is Mental Wellbeing?

A useful description is ‘feeling good and functioning well’. Different things can influence our mental wellbeing. Evidence shows that the actions we take and the way we think have the biggest impact. It can help to think about ‘being well’ as something you do, rather than something you are. The more you put in, the more you are likely to get out.

## How Can I Improve My Mental Wellbeing?

There are some steps that we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing. Approach them with an open mind and try them out, and you can judge the results yourself.

- **Connect - Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships, whether it is through sport, hobbies or just by talking and keeping in touch.**

- **Be active** - This could just mean taking a walk, going cycling or playing a game of football with friends. Activity makes us feel better, so find activities that you enjoy, and make them a part of your life.
- **Learn** - Learning new skills gives you a sense of achievement and increases your confidence. So why not sign up for a cookery course, take some music lessons, or read up on how to fix your bike?
- **Give** - Even the smallest act can count, whether it is a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
- **Take notice** - Be aware of the present moment, including your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you. Some people call this 'mindfulness', and it can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.
- **Face problems** - When things are going wrong for you, it can be tempting to ignore the problem and hope it will go away. It may not. Usually, the quicker you start dealing with a problem, the easier it is to solve.
- **Assert yourself** - If you find it hard to stand up for yourself, anger can build up inside, causing tension and anxiety. Assertiveness training classes can improve your ability to handle difficult situations.
- **Set goals** - This involves thinking about ways to improve your life. You could ask yourself, 'Where would I like to be in a month or a year's time?', 'What small changes can I make now?' Keep a diary and note down the progress that you make.

## Emotional Wellbeing

## What is Emotional Wellbeing?

One useful definition of emotional health is 'having a relaxed body, an open mind and an open heart'. It means having self-esteem and being calm and patient with yourself. It means being able to feel, rather than control, emotions and express them in a healthy way.



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Spirituality can give someone a sense of their own worth and value, and help someone to develop inner strength and peace. Spiritual practices may include belonging to a faith community; meditation and prayer; living by a set of codes, such as in your personal relationships with family and friends, or how you treat others generally; emphasis on spiritual values: honesty, kindness, hope and compassion.

## Further Information

The [NHS Choices website](#) has guidance on a variety of aspects of wellbeing, including healthy eating and keeping fit.

The [BBC Health website](#) has help and advice on a range of health issues, including emotional health.

The [Rethink charity website](#) has information, advice and services related to mental health and wellbeing.

The [Mind charity website](#) has information, advice and services related to mental health and wellbeing.

If you want to talk anonymously or urgently, you can call the [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org) 24 hours a day on **08457 90 90 90**.



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This information guide has been prepared by the Bank Workers Charity and contains general information only. Nothing in this guide should be construed as specific advice and it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is correct; however, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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