

Health and Wellbeing Breakout Exercise Notes

Ways to Wellbeing

The mental health charity Mind has developed [Five Ways of Wellbeing](#) – areas that you can focus on to promote good mental health.

Attendees of the 22 April Forum took part in a breakout exercise with each group focussing on one of the Five Ways of Wellbeing. The breakout exercise considered the scenario below.

The Exercise

Imagine you are speaking to a friend, family member or colleague who is asking for ways they can look after their mental health and wellbeing. Discuss the wellbeing way your group has been assigned and create suggestions on what the individual could do to focus on this way to wellbeing and improve their mental wellbeing. Do any of these suggestions tie in with the other wellbeing ways? Are there any charities, organisations or events that you know of that can support this wellbeing way? What have you done in this way of wellbeing to look after your own mental health? What works well?

What are the Ways of Wellbeing?

Connect

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental health problems for people of all ages.

Be active

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting wellbeing. But it doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good – slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise.

Take notice

Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities. Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations. Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you.

Learning

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps to lift older people out of depression. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Our Ideas

These are the ideas the breakout groups came up with for each Way of Wellbeing:

Connect

- Social media to keep in touch – Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor,
- WhatsApp - send messages, pictures and do video calls.
- Zoom - to attend events remotely like religious ceremonies, baby showers or birthdays, and for getting involved with politics and local events. This can help to keep mentally active and engaged, and this can also be done via online forums or social media.
- It could be helpful to see if there are online forums on topics and subjects you are interested in, where you could meet likeminded people and get involved in discussions, debates, online events etc. Look up local clubs and societies.
- Community spirit - checking in on your neighbours and stopping to talk to them in person. NextDoor is an app that was helpful for getting to know neighbours and helping each other out.
- Remember that you don't have to be good friends to speak to someone or connect with others. You could volunteer with a local charity or get involved in local events and organisations to make personal connections.

Be Active

- Do an online workout – use YouTube or Instagram to find free online workouts from strength, to cardio, dance and boxing.
- Run - "Couch to 5k" app can help you get fit and potentially do a charity running event.
- Yoga – learn yoga to help stretch and relax. There are free videos on YouTube and apps such as DownDog.
- Volunteer at a local animal charity or ask a local resident if they need help walking their dogs.
- Learn local walking routes in your area – the National Trust properties have some great locations, and you can look up [local bridleways online](#)

Take Notice

- Make sure you have periods of free time throughout the day.
- Try to have variety in the day to break up monotony.
- There's a link between physical and mental wellbeing – try to stay physically active.
- Create a clear headspace and try to remain in the present.
- Take advantage of apps such as Headspace and Calm, which offer good mindfulness and breathing exercises. And allocate the time to practice mindfulness, even if it's just five minutes.
- Keep a 'gratitude journal' and write a bullet or two each day on what you are grateful for in your life. Remind yourself of the positive aspects of life.
- Make time to spend with family, friends or colleagues.

- Take advantage of ‘water cooler’ moments and take the time to talk to colleagues about non work-related stuff.
- Follow up and check in on those around you regularly.
- If you’re sending an email while feeling stressed or angry, send the draft to yourself first, then step away and come back to the email later when you’re calmer. You might have a different perspective on the situation after some time away and this can help with miscommunications.

Learn

- Language study – apps like Duolingo or [free online resources on the BBC](#) can help.
- A new skill – courses available online at [Udemy](#) and [Coursera](#).
- Learn about a topic that interests you - online free courses available at [The OU](#) (Open University) and [FutureLearn](#).
- Take up a new hobby – there are lots of free online resources such as blogs and clubs on hobbies such as gardening or DIY.

Give

- Donate to a charity or a cause that means a lot to you personally, one that you can monitor and/or see in action as personally rewarding. It doesn’t have to be money - have a clear out and donate unwanted items to a local charity or give food to a local food bank.
- Do a charity running event – this is mutually beneficial to you (you get fit!) and the charity (which gets donations) Use a “Couch to 5K” app or attend your local ParkRun (which are set up nationally in local parks and greenspaces)
- Giving isn’t always money or physical things – it can be giving time, listening or giving someone your trust and support. Connect with friends and make time for your loved ones.
- Share your skills and knowledge – teach your friends and family something new! Share a hobby or interest you enjoy with likeminded friends and family or join an online group and share your skills and knowledge more widely.
- Volunteer at a local charity shop or homeless shelter or animal rescue centre.
- Many people may be anxious about the world returning to normal again, so focus on giving people understanding as well as money or time. Give each other kindness, tolerance and confidence as we return to normal and navigate new rules.
- Connectivity is a way of giving – giving the time and giving support virtually. Technology is an enabler of this (Zoom, Facebook, MS Teams, etc)