

5 steps to mental wellbeing

Scientific evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

1. Connect with other people

Good relationships are really important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others
- feel connected and less isolated

Things you could try to help build stronger and closer relationships:

- Come to BeaRCats!
- Chat when you're running & before/after with a cup of tea
- Find people to run or walk with during the rest of the week or meet up socially
- Connect on social media/WhatsApp
- Come along to the big social event on 28th April, more will be planned!

2. Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood
- raising your self esteem
- Come to BeaRCats!
- Consider giving yourself a goal - stepping up a group, a timed 5k, Turks Head 10k, Cabbage Patch 10, a half/full marathon or an ultra.
- Other BeaRCats do open water swimming, SUP boarding, HIT training, yoga, walking - talk to others & join in or seek out activities you think you will enjoy and make them a part of your life
- Spend regular time outside enjoying nature to reduce your blood pressure, heart rate and stress levels and make you feel good

3. Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others

Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

Some of the things you could try include:

- Consider becoming a volunteer or trained leader at BeaRCats
- Try out something new like SUP boarding/open water swimming
- Ask others what they have enjoyed learning - we have BeaRCats who are expert knitters, painters & bakers among others & they could help you get started/inspire you.
- Consider signing up for a course at Richmond college or University of the 3rd Age . You could try learning a new language, art or a practical skill

Do not feel you have to learn new qualifications or sit exams if this does not interest you. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life

4. Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- helping you connect with other people

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

Some examples of the things you could try include:

- Consider becoming a volunteer leader at BeaRCats
- Consider volunteering for the Parkrun takeover on 25th March
- Consider volunteering in our community, such as helping at a local school or food bank
- Ask other BeaRCats what they do - lots of people run races for charities, we have people who volunteer at Dose of Nature, Park Lane Riding Stables, also for homeless, refugee & other charities.
- Offering to help someone you know with DIY or a work project
- Spending time with friends or relatives who need support or company

5. Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Scientific studies show that making time to focus on the present moment, without distractions, can improve your mental wellbeing by making you feel relaxed and motivated. Concentrating on your thoughts and feelings, your body

and the world immediately around you can create a sense of wakeful relaxation, similar to when enjoying your favourite music.

Some call this awareness "mindfulness". It can calm the overactive mind, reduce anxiety and create peaceful feelings which help you feel connected, engaged and inspired. It can positively change the way you feel about yourself and your relationships and enjoy life more.

Some steps you can take to be more mindful in your everyday life:

- Spend time outside, enjoying the physical and psychological benefits of nature, at least 3 hours a week
- Use all your senses to experience the sights, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes around you
- Close your eyes and take a few minutes to recall a memorable outdoor place you've experienced and recall what makes it special for you
- Do this with a friend and share how it made you feel

Local links if you need more help:

Hounslow MIND <https://www.hfehmind.org.uk>

Richmond MIND <https://www.rbmind.org/>

Self-referral to talking therapy:

IAPT talking therapy Hounslow <https://www.westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/adult/iapt/iapt-hounslow>

Richmond Well-being Service <https://richmondwellbeingservice.nhs.uk/>

You can also speak to your GP & ask for a referral for talking therapy or for a referral to a social prescriber for more local options for support

You can also speak to your GP for additional support if you need more help

Reach out to Claire Islam in person/social media or by email (claireislam@hotmail.com) if you need help to signpost you to the right service