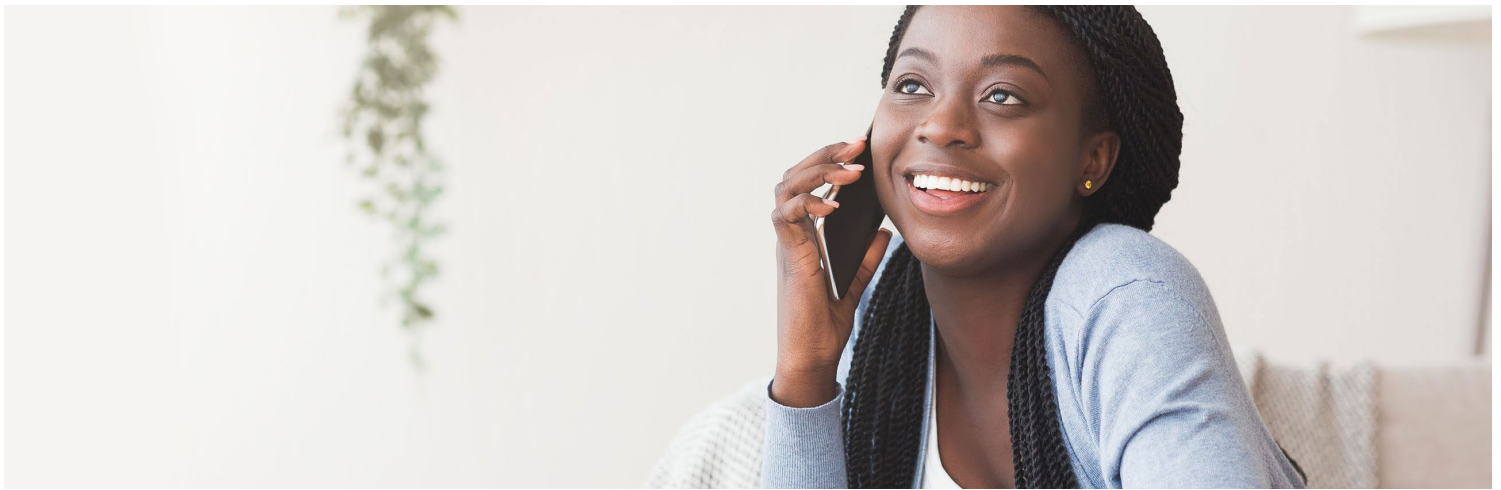




Five steps towards mental wellbeing

Mental Health Awareness Week starts on Monday 9 May and aims to raise awareness of mental health issues and promote mental wellbeing.

This year's theme is 'loneliness', which has been a struggle experienced by many during the pandemic.

According to the mental health charity **Mind**, at least **one in four people** experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England.

Mental health is a continuum, and different life events or experiences can impact where we sit on that scale.

For example, recent events such as the rise in energy bills, a wave in Covid-19 infections and the Ukraine conflict may have had an impact on people's wellbeing and increased feelings of anxiety.

Boosting your mental health

Many factors influence our mental wellbeing but **the actions we take** and **the way we think** can have a huge impact.

It can help to think about "being well" as **something you do**, rather than something you are.

Five steps towards mental wellbeing

Here are five things you can try to implement into your routine to help support your mental wellbeing:

Connect - stay in touch regularly with the people that matter to you and spend time positively nurturing these relationships. If you don't have anyone close you can reach out to, try to connect with colleagues at work, with online communities or with people in your local area – such as your neighbours.

Be active – such as taking a walk, cycling or playing a team sport. Try to find physical activities that you enjoy and make them a part of your weekly routine.

Keep learning - new skills can give you a sense of achievement and help to boost your self-esteem. For example, you could sign up for a cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument or spend time on a DIY project you've been avoiding.

Give to others - even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. If you keep up the behaviour it will soon feel natural and you'll start to feel better for it.

Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre can also help you to build new social networks.

Be present – try to be in the 'present' moment, instead of living in the past or future. Take a pause in your day and notice your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you.

This is often referred to as "mindfulness" and it can really change the way you feel about life, how you approach challenges and the level of gratitude you feel.

Your Mind Plan

Taking steps to look after our mental health is something we need to do continually. The NHS have created a great interactive tool called **Your Mind Plan** which offers further ideas you can try tailored to you.

As well as the mental health charity **Mind**, you can find further support online from **Samaritans** (call 116 123 for their 24/7 helpline), **Mental Health Foundation** and **Every Mind Matters**.