

# Self-directed support

## Five ways to well-being

The ‘five ways to well-being’ is a set of simple actions which can help improve your mental health and well-being.

This fact sheet gives you some simple ideas on how you can keep your mind healthy and act on the ‘five ways to well-being’.



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## The basic facts

A healthy mind and sense of well-being can help in many ways. It can help you develop your potential, help you be more creative and productive, and help build relationships with others.

The idea is to keep the mind healthy through day-to-day use and maintenance. Much like how eating five fruit or vegetables a day can help the body stay healthy.

The five activities are based on connecting with others, being active, taking notice of our surroundings, continued learning and giving to others.

Just taking the time to do one of these activities every day can really make a big difference. Evidence shows that if you regularly practice these suggestions then it can help you function better, make you feel good and even add years to your life.

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# More information on the 'five ways to well-being'

The 'five ways to well-being' are to:

- Connect
- Be active
- Keep learning
- Take notice
- Give

They are based on scientific evidence from the UK Government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Well-being.

## Connect

It can be good to build relationships and interact with other people. Social relationships are a basic human need and are important to our well-being. Strengthening relationships with those close to you, re-establishing old connections and widening your network of friends can all have a positive effect on your well-being.

## Be active

Being active can have a really positive impact on your mood and well-being. Exercise and activity help you feel better and give you more energy. Everyone can be active and you do not necessarily need to do activities at a fast pace to feel good.

## Taking notice

Being more aware of what is around you and your thoughts and feelings can really improve your well-being. Trips into the countryside or to the coast can open up new experiences and stimulate new hobbies and pastimes. Take some time to sit and notice your surroundings, the smells, the colours, the details. Look again at the things you sometimes take for granted.

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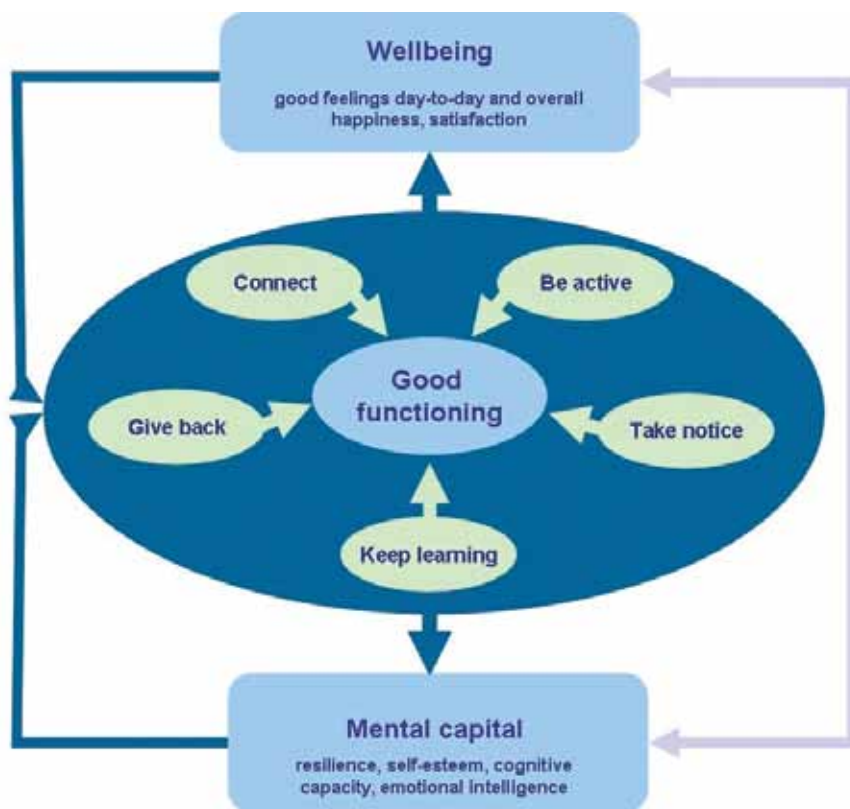
## Keep learning

Learning, whether focused or through experience, plays an important role in everyone’s life. Continued learning throughout your life can help increase your self-esteem and encourage a more social and active lifestyle.

## Give

Doing something for others can really help you feel good. Giving and helping others can give you a sense of purpose in your community and can give you a sense of self-worth.

These five actions all have a positive impact on your well-being and mental health. The diagram below shows how they are linked and can work together:



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## More detail

This section gives you some more ideas about how to put the actions into practice.

### Connect...

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

### Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

### Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

### Keep learning...

Try something new. Re-discover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

### Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

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# There is a lot more information on the In Control website: [www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)

The suggestions in this fact sheet are taken from the Foresight project Mental Capital and Wellbeing ([www.foresight.gov.uk](http://www.foresight.gov.uk)) published in October 2008. The project commissioned the centre for well-being at nef (the new economics foundation – [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)) to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing.

To find out more about well-being you can visit the following websites:

**National accounts of well-being**  
[www.nationalaccountsowellbeing.org](http://www.nationalaccountsowellbeing.org)

**Happy Planet Index**  
[www.happyplanetindex.org](http://www.happyplanetindex.org)

**Mind**  
For better mental health  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**The Wellbeing Project**  
Mental health promotion  
[www.wellbeingproject.co.uk](http://www.wellbeingproject.co.uk)

**Mindapples**  
A new initiative promoting mentally healthy living for everyone  
[www.mindapples.org](http://www.mindapples.org)

## About the In Control and Me project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support, funded by the National Lottery through the BIG Lottery Fund. You can find out more at [www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol](http://www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol) or [www.in-control.org.uk/icandme](http://www.in-control.org.uk/icandme)

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