

5 WAYS TO Wellbeing



Nature is one of the perfect settings in which to practice the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. Why not try them for yourself using the suggestions inside?

Introduction

Making time to look after yourself is getting harder in day-to-day life. This leaflet aims to help you find new ways to relax and feel better in yourself. Through five simple steps you can change the way you feel. As human beings, we thrive when we are part of a social group, are physically active and have a purpose. Our bodies are meant to be active and we're designed to be connected to nature. In times like these it can be challenging to maintain our connections with nature, and our wellbeing can suffer as a result.

Evidence suggests that even a small improvement in our wellbeing can help to decrease mental health problems and allow us to flourish. The 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' are a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing. They include Connect, Take Notice, Be Active, Keep Learning and Give – and are particularly effective when practised outdoors!



1

Connect



Feeling close to, and valued by, other people is something we all need. It helps us to function well. Strong social relationships are a 'buffer' against mental ill health for people of all ages. Engaging with positive and supportive people can increase your confidence and ability in difficult times.

- Conversations are an important part of staying connected. Take time to have conversations (video calls work well) with different people in a day. Find out how people are feeling and support them. Try to make them laugh and smile.
- Take time each day to eat, drink or play games with other people (outside if you can) – if there is nobody around, try having a virtual picnic.
- Check out the Wildlife Trust webcams or take a virtual tour of a nature reserve with someone in your household, or with a colleague, family member or friend whilst in conversation over the phone.
- Get to know your neighbours, whilst maintaining social distances - are there ways you can help them?

2

Take Notice



If we really stop and take notice of what's going on around us, we become much more aware of our surroundings, other people and their feelings. This improves our wellbeing. Taking notice and enjoying the natural world around us has a particularly strong effect and helps us make positive decisions.

- Spend five or ten minutes quietly listening or watching from your window, in your garden or local green space.
- Take notice of how your family or colleagues are feeling or acting, even via video or phone call.
- Try “mindfulness” to help you enjoy life and understand yourself better. There are plenty of resources online.
- Listen to the sounds of nature - they are proven to reduce stress. For example, notice birdsong out your window, in your garden or local green space.
- Read or sit outside, even if you can only get to a balcony, or sit by an open window.
- Watch, or even better, feed the birds, from your window or in your garden.
- Share the nature you see with friends and family online - swapping such experiences helps you to stay in touch.



3

Keep Learning



Continued learning throughout our lives helps with self-esteem. It also encourages us to interact with other people and lead a more active life – both physically and mentally. Activities that educate, broaden the mind and help us to learn new things can lift us out of depression. Setting challenging but achievable goals is also associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

- Talk to your colleagues or neighbours and find out something about them that you didn't know.
- Sign up for a class or course – the internet is awash with virtual classes (e.g. futurelearn.com).
- Do puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, jigsaws or GWT quizzes to exercise your brain.
- Learn to recognise birdsong, identify bees in your garden or learn wildflowers on your local walk.
- Learn to make something new that benefits wildlife – the GWT website has lots of ideas - www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/home-ideas.
- Tree of the Week: learn a new tree every week and share your new knowledge with somebody.

4

Be Active



Regular physical activity and raising the heart rate is associated with better health and lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. It doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good, revitalised, calm and relaxed.

- Go for a walk, with members of your household if possible, to connect and take notice of nature together.
- Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching, as a morning routine, preferably in the garden, on the patio or by an open window.
- Plant things for the windowsill or garden, create a bug hotel, build a nest box or dig a pond. Find easy instructions on the GWT website.
- Explore your local green spaces every day on your daily walk. Use maps to research new local walks, particularly around green spaces.
- Add 'outdoor gym' activities into your daily walk. Is there a hill you could walk or run up, a tree you could stretch against, different places you could stop to take different exercises - why not get creative and see what you can come up with?



5

Give



Getting involved in social and community life has been shown to improve wellbeing. People who have a genuine interest in helping others, and nature, are more likely to consider themselves happy.

Committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period has been shown to increase personal wellbeing.

- Do something nice for a friend, colleague, neighbour or stranger without expectation of return.
- Feed the birds, make a bird bath or wildlife pond.
- Create more wild spaces for nature. Make a hole in your fence to allow hedgehogs through, or make a feeding station or hedgehog-house for them – see GWT website for details.
- Plant for bees and butterflies in the garden, patio or window-box.
www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/activities-everyone.
- Look outwards – see your happiness in the context of the wider community and environment and take action to improve them.

For some inspiration and ideas

www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/what-we-do/health-and-wellbeing

www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams

www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/camera-trap-tuesdays

www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/tag/mental-health

www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/learn-something-new

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/spotting-sheets

www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/what-we-do/health-and-wellbeing/health-wellbeing

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