

# Help yourself - 10 ways to boost your emotional wellbeing and mental health



Improving emotional wellbeing and mental health is often about spotting the warning signs that things feel like they are going downhill and trying out some things to balance life a little more.

Here are 10 things that young people and professionals have noticed can make a real difference.

1. **Food and mood** Changes in blood sugar levels are linked to changes in mood and energy. Eating regularly maintains blood sugar levels. Not eating regularly can make you tired, irritable, anxious and cause poor concentration. Good tips include eating breakfast, eating every 3-4 hours, avoiding junk foods, eating plenty of fruit and veg and drinking lots of water.
2. **Keep active** Physical activity helps release endorphins which can improve your mood. When you feel low in mood you might stop doing the things that can improve your mood, almost without realising it. Making sure you do some physical exercise, even if you don't feel like it at first, can give you quick results in improving your mood.
3. **Drink sensibly** Alcohol can cause depressive feelings, heightened anxiety, or feeling out of control in a way that feels unpleasant. It can also increase risk taking behaviours, so you need to know what your reactions might be. Remember to make your own decisions about what is right for you and not to bend to peer pressure around drinking.
4. **Express yourself** Some people like to read to learn about the world, or escape into other worlds. Some people like to express their feelings through art, some like talking things through with others. Whatever your style, make sure you do express yourself - it will help you to stay connected, to discover more about you, your identity, and the person that you want to become.
5. **Distract yourself** When you are feeling immersed in a problem, let yourself switch off from it and go and do something completely different. When you return to it at a different time it may seem more manageable. Distracting yourself is not a cop-out, but can be a reliable way to stop

overthinking a problem when you are feeling stuck.

6. **Ask for help** How would you feel if a friend asked for help, advice or just wanted to talk things through? Many of us would be pleased to be chosen to confide in, it might make us feel valued. When you are feeling low in mood, or anxious, it is easy to think negatively about yourself and be less likely to seek support from others. Try and beat this feeling and approach people that you trust to talk to. You may be surprised at how much better you might feel and how they have responded positively to you, as you would if the situation were reversed.
7. **Learn to take time out and relax** People have lots of different ways of relaxing or having downtime from the stresses of life. These can be the things that you stop doing when you start to feel low in mood, or stressed, as you forget to be kind to yourself. A hot bath, listening to music, watching a film, keeping social arrangements and hobbies going, whatever it is, think about the things that help to keep you calm or more content, and make sure they are still in your routine.
8. **Do something you enjoy** We are all unique and enjoy different things. You may not have found the thing that you enjoy yet, so try some different things out. You may have lost touch with activities that have given you pleasure in the past. Doing things you enjoy can help you to stay connected with some of the more positive aspects of life.
9. **Remember your good points** We all have them, and none of us is perfect either. It can be easy to think that others are more talented, more successful, have more opportunity than us, when you are feeling low in mood. But it is impossible to know how someone else is feeling inside, whatever they seem like on the surface. Remind yourself about the things you do well, and looking for evidence of this can help to balance out critical thoughts about yourself, which tend to increase when we are stressed.
10. **Self-help** Use online resources and books that offer help and support, information and advice, or just give another perspective. Some people like books with information, some people like reading about other people's experiences. Some people like novels with a particular theme. Some people prefer films. Whatever works best for you. Why not pop into your local library and check out their Shelf Help books.