

HEALTHY AGEING SERVICE

HELPSHEET: Looking After Your Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing are important

Mental health includes the way we think, feel, and cope with everyday life and stressors - and is not merely the absence of a mental health condition. Wellbeing is not just being happy but is the state of thriving. Having good mental health and wellbeing helps us to maintain our functioning, physical health, social relationships, and quality of life.

Strategies to support mental health and wellbeing



Relaxation Skills can reduce stress and anxiety, improve energy levels, and don't require any equipment. The relaxation response helps to counteract symptoms we experience when feeling anxious, by inducing slower and deeper breathing, relaxed muscles, and a slower heart rate. Examples of relaxation skills include:

- **Calm breathing:** breath in for 4 seconds, hold for two seconds, exhale for 6 seconds. Repeat 6 times.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** tense then release muscles, working up from feet to head.



Physical Movement helps us maintain a quality of life that allows us to get the most out of our daily activities. It also helps support our mental health and emotional wellbeing – there is a strong link between exercise and improved mood. Try to incorporate more physical activity into the day, such as using the stairs, joining an exercise class, or going for a walk outside.



Grounding/Mindfulness Techniques can be used to manage psychological distress by distracting us from unpleasant thoughts, memories or feelings, by getting us to focus on the present moment instead. Grounding is a common mindfulness technique. Some examples of grounding techniques include:

- **Connecting with your environment:** stomping feet, gardening, stretching
- **5-4-3-2-1:** Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.



Good Sleep: During sleep, our brain processes emotions and memories, and our bodies repair and regenerate. Without enough rest, we can experience negative effects on mood, cognitive function and stress levels. Relaxation exercises and physical activity during the day is helpful in inducing a calm state and may improve restlessness experienced before sleep.