



# Looking after **you**

SIMPLE STRATEGIES  
FOR BUSY TIMES

Superfriend<sup>®</sup>

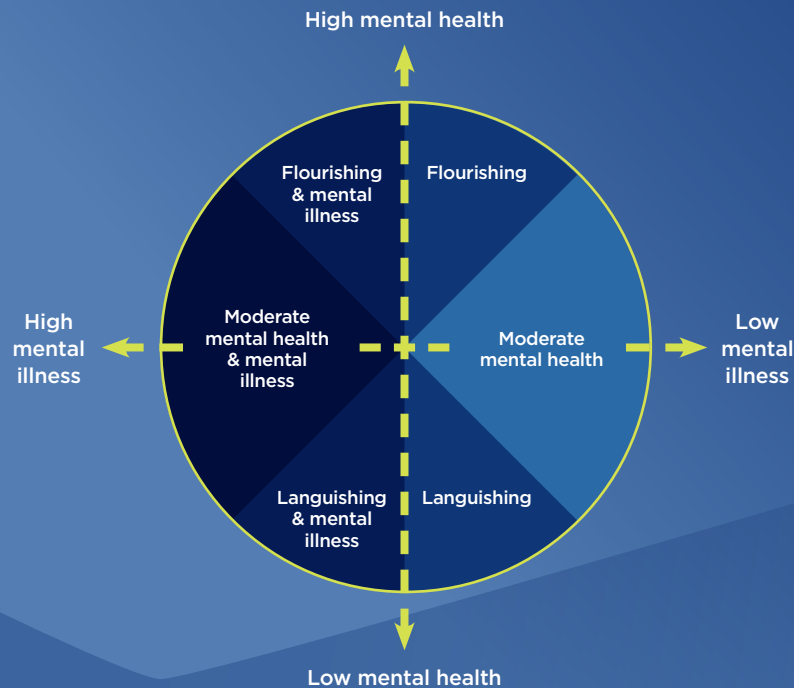
# WHY WELLBEING MATTERS

## UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Having good mental health, or being mentally healthy, is more than just the absence of illness; it's a state of overall wellbeing. The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."

So rather than being about what is not going well, it is really about **what is going well**.

The diagram below shows that mental health and mental illness are not opposites, but rather are on two different measures. It explains how wellbeing can be improved for people who do not have a diagnosed mental illness, but have low levels of mental health and wellbeing, and for those who do have a diagnosed mental illness.



The horizontal continuum represents mental illness. On this continuum, we know that some people have high, or serious, mental illness, while others have low, or even no mental illness. Mental illness is often episodic, and people can move across this continuum throughout their lives; this is dependent on many factors including genetic, environmental, psychosocial, age, behaviour and circumstance.

Mental health is not a fixed state and feeling mentally healthy is not about being free of mental illness. It is possible to have a mental illness and yet still be at our best and thriving, for example by having appropriate self-care practices in place and accessing the best level of support for our needs.

Likewise, we can still be languishing or not at our best if we don't have a diagnosed mental illness.

The vertical continuum is for mental wellbeing, with one end representing poor mental wellbeing or 'languishing' and the other end representing a high level of mental health or 'flourishing'. Like mental illness, we also move up and down this continuum throughout our lives.

## TAKE THE WELLBEING QUIZ

	Rarely	Sometimes	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling interested in other people	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've had energy to spare	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been dealing with problems well	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been thinking clearly	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling good about myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling closer to other people	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling confident	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling loved	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been interested in new things	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I've been feeling cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

Your total:

### References

LaMontagne, A.D., et al. Workplace mental health: developing an integrated intervention approach. BMC Psychiatry. 2014. 14:131.

NEF Five ways to wellbeing 2008

## WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

**A score between 0-19:** You can aim to boost your wellbeing score by connecting with people who count on you, helping someone else to do a new activity, learning a new skill or by appreciating your environment more. If you are feeling very low or unnecessarily anxious, you could talk to your GP or health service.

**A score between 20-23:** You're on the right track! You can aim to maintain or even boost your wellbeing score by doing one or more activities from the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

**A score of 24 and above:** You're doing great! You can aim to maintain your wellbeing score by keeping up the activities you are already involved in or perhaps trying a new wellbeing activity, from the Five Ways to Wellbeing.



## FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

Everyone is different and there is no single best approach for improving or staying mentally well, however, recent evidence suggests there are five main ways you can play an active role towards improving, protecting and maintaining your wellbeing.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing was developed by the New Economics Foundation for the UK government, and is based on extensive research and evidence about protective factors for psychological and emotional wellbeing operating at an individual level. The Five Ways focus on practical actions to improve wellbeing.

### Connect

When we connect with others, it can result in:

- ▶ Higher levels of happiness
- ▶ Increased resilience
- ▶ Improved daily positive mood and wellbeing
- ▶ Reduced risk of mental illness
- ▶ A longer life

There are lots of ways to connect:

- ▶ Catch up with friends for coffee
- ▶ Chat to a colleague over lunch
- ▶ Join a group of people with common interests
- ▶ Voice or video call a friend
- ▶ Play online games or board games with friends or family
- ▶ Start or join a book club



### Keep learning

Learning can sometimes feel a bit unsettling because it's outside our comfort zone. But learning new skills and extending knowledge helps our mental wellbeing through:

- ▶ Improved self-esteem
- ▶ Improved ability to problem solve
- ▶ A sense of accomplishment
- ▶ Increased autonomy and resiliency

To keep learning you can do a course, but it isn't just about formal learning. You could:

- ▶ Join a book club
- ▶ Watch an online video to learn a new recipe
- ▶ Ask your parents or grandparents about life when they were growing up
- ▶ Spend 10 minutes a day reading from a journal or connecting with an expert in your field
- ▶ Learn a new DIY skill
- ▶ Learn a musical instrument

### Be active

Being active is great for physical health and fitness. However, it can also improve mental wellbeing. It can lead to:

- ▶ A lift in mood
- ▶ Reduced anxiety and stress
- ▶ Feeling more calm and mellow
- ▶ Better concentration
- ▶ Improved sleep
- ▶ Increased motivation

There are many ways to be active. You can:

- ▶ Walk instead of drive to your local shops
- ▶ Play a game
- ▶ Go dancing
- ▶ Stand or go for a walk during work meetings
- ▶ Organise a step challenge with your colleagues
- ▶ Download a walking or running app and set yourself a challenge to complete a certain distance
- ▶ Complete gym classes
- ▶ Go for a bike ride





## Take notice

When we're busy it can be easy to rush through the day without paying attention to the little things. But taking notice can result in improvements to our:

- ▶ Attention
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Emotional management
- ▶ Self-esteem
- ▶ Stress management

You can take notice though:

- ▶ Taking a deep breath
- ▶ Focusing on one task at a time and minimising distractions
- ▶ Driving or walking a different way home from work
- ▶ Savouring a favourite meal or drink
- ▶ Eating lunch outside
- ▶ Reflecting on one thing you are grateful for
- ▶ Paying attention to the plants in your home or garden and how they change daily
- ▶ Downloading a meditation or mindfulness app and practicing daily



## Give

Helping others doesn't just benefit them, it's also really good for us. Giving can help with:

- ▶ Improved self-esteem
- ▶ A sense of purpose
- ▶ Improved life satisfaction
- ▶ A sense of accomplishment

The great thing about giving is that it's also a multiplier: the people we give to are more likely to give back to us, and to others.

Giving can be as simple as:

- ▶ Helping a colleague solve a problem
- ▶ Donating to charity
- ▶ Thanking your colleagues throughout the day
- ▶ Sending a thank you note to someone who contributed something positive to your day
- ▶ Giving the people you're talking to your full, focused attention - it will make them feel valued and appreciated
- ▶ Sharing a favourite recipe with friends or family
- ▶ Helping neighbours do their shopping or walking their dog if they need assistance

## THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

Undertaking self-care activities and behaviours and looking after yourself has many benefits:

 Lowered risk of developing mental health conditions	 Improved mood	 Increased happiness
 Sense of belonging	 Increased self-knowledge	 Increased self-regulation
 Increased self-esteem	 Increased life satisfaction	 Increased optimism



## CREATE YOUR OWN WELLBEING PLAN

Grab a hot drink and spend 10 minutes creating your own wellbeing plan. Think about what you're currently doing, or have tried before, and what's worked well. If you're stuck for ideas, think about someone in your life who inspires you. What are they doing to take care of themselves?



	Be active	Connect	Keep learning	Take notice	Give
What am I doing now?					
What do I want to change or do more of?					
What is one thing I can do to get started?					



# NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO?

Keep this list on hand,  
just in case you or  
someone you know  
needs support.

- ▶ Your GP
- ▶ Your employer's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ▶ Lifeline **13 11 14**
- ▶ Suicide Call Back Service **1300 659 467**
- ▶ Beyond Blue **1300 22 46 36**
- ▶ MensLine Australia **1300 789 978**

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