



Growing older and mental health

Tips and information to help maintain your emotional wellbeing in later life

Some people believe that mental health problems are a 'normal' part of the ageing process, but this does not need to be the case.

Although some people do develop conditions such as depression in older age, there are sources of support and things you can do to help improve your mental wellbeing as you age.

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing means feeling good – about yourself and the world around you – and being able to get on with life in the way you want to. Just because you are getting older, you should still be able to enjoy life and get the most out of it.

How can I improve my emotional wellbeing?

There are five 'steps' to wellbeing you can follow. These are:



Be active

Anything that keeps you moving is good for your physical and mental health. A walk, a spot of gardening, dancing or swimming will all do you good. If you have an underlying health condition you should be careful not to do too much, but even a bit of light housework will get your body moving.



Connect

Loneliness can affect us all but relationships with other people are important. Try and spend time with family and friends, or join a group. Even chatting to people in a shop or library will help. If you are unable to get about, why not pick up the phone and have a conversation with someone you haven't spoken to for a while.



Keep learning

Learning new skills increases your confidence. You could sign up for an evening class, learn a new language or a new skill. You could read a book about something that interests you or try a new hobby or DIY skill. These will all keep your brain active.



Give to others

We get a mental boost from being kind to others. This could be as simple as saying hello or waving to someone in the street. If you could help a friend or volunteer to help a local club, you will feel better about yourself.



Take notice

Try and concentrate on the good things around you. Pay attention to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes you experience. This will help you enjoy life and understand yourself better.

It is normal to become more forgetful as we get older, and memory loss will usually be a gradual process.

However, memory loss can be distressing, for the person affected as well as their family. Relatives may fear the worse, assuming it is dementia, but this is often not the case. However, it is important to see your GP if you are worried about memory loss – particularly if it comes on suddenly - as it can sometimes be a sign of something more serious.

Tips to improve your memory:

- Keep everyday items, such as your keys or glasses, in the same place all the time.
- Try to do things in the same order and keep a routine as much as you can.
- Write information down and keep a pen and paper handy by the phone.
- Keep a diary to remind you to do things.
- Use an alarm to remind you to do things, such as take things out of the oven or take medication.
- Repeat back important information you need to remember.

What is dementia?

Dementia is a disease of the brain that affects people's memory, thinking, concentration and language. People may become confused and start to struggle with everyday activities. Dementia can cause people to feel anxious, depressed and angry but everyone is affected differently.

Many people live well with dementia for many years, however dementia is progressive and the symptoms will get worse over time. The most common forms of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and Vascular Dementia. Although younger people can get dementia it is more common in people aged over 65.

If you are worried about yourself or someone you know contact your GP. You can also call Managing Memory ²gether for advice. An early diagnosis can help people to get the right treatment and support and to prepare and plan for the future. With support and treatment, people living with dementia are able to live active and fulfilled lives.

Caring for someone?

In the UK just under 1.3 million people aged over 65 provide unpaid care to a relative or friend*. Although caring for someone you love may be rewarding, it can also be exhausting and stressful. Research has shown that people caring for someone with dementia and/or a mental health problem are likely experience high levels of depression and anxiety themselves. Getting the right support and information can make a real difference to you and the person you care for.

Further information and support

If you are concerned about your mental health, your memory or any other health issue, please speak to your GP.

At ²gether we provide services to assist with mental wellbeing, as well as memory issues, dementia and other related conditions.



Let's Talk is an Improving Access to Psychological Therapy service (IAPT). We offer free information, guidance and therapy during times when you feel stressed, anxious or depressed. If you live in **Gloucestershire or Herefordshire** and want to speak to someone about your emotional wellbeing, please ring on 0800 073 2200 or visit www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

If you live in **Gloucestershire** and are worried about your memory or the memory of someone you care for, ring our **Managing Memory service** on 0800 694 8800.

If you live in **Herefordshire** and are worried about your memory or the memory of someone you care for, ring our Memory Clinic on 01432 361600.

To see the full range of services we provide, visit www.2gether.nhs.uk.

Other sources of support

NHS Choices

NHS Choices is full of information on health and ways to improve your wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk/livewell

Walk4Life

Walk4Life can help you find great walks in your local area.

www.walk4life.info

Age UK

Age UK aims to improve later life for everyone through information and advice, services, campaigns, products, training and research.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers.

www.alzheimers.org.uk

Carers Gloucestershire

Provide a range of information and support services for carers.

www.carersgloucestershire.org.uk

Herefordshire Carers Support

A registered charity providing practical support and advice to the carer community in the county.

www.herefordshirecarerssupport.org