



# Mental Wellbeing

We continue our series of articles by Dr Libby Artingstall and Dr Sile McDaid, Co-Founders and Directors of Team Mental Health.

## Team Mental Health's top 5 New Year's Resolutions!

**Mental health is a state of wellbeing. Mental ill health reflects a deterioration in our mental health. Like physical health, we all have mental health and we need to know how to protect it so that we can thrive.**

January is a great time for setting out plans for the year ahead. Why not take the opportunity to prioritise your mental health and wellbeing and commit to these 5 simple actions on a regular basis?

### 1) Breathe and relax.

Deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, yoga and tai chi are examples of relaxation techniques which have been shown to counter the physiological response induced by stress.<sup>1</sup> This can have a positive impact on our physical and mental health. There are many different and helpful ways to relax and feel a sense of calm. Take the time to explore what works for you and try to build regular periods of deep breathing and relaxation into your weekly or daily schedule.

### 2) Drink water and stay hydrated.

As our body weight is comprised of almost 60% water it makes sense that dehydration can have a significant negative impact on our mental and physical health.<sup>2</sup> Dehydration can negatively impact our mood, energy levels and how alert we feel.<sup>3</sup> Maximise your ability to protect your mental and physical health and carry a water bottle with you so you can stay hydrated throughout the day.

### 3) Think about taking up a new hobby or re-discover an old interest.

Keeping learning and stimulating ourselves mentally has been shown to protect our mental health.<sup>4</sup> This doesn't have to be a major commitment and things like picking up a good book, playing a board game or cooking a meal can all be beneficial. If busy schedules don't allow this, simple (but slightly messy!) acts like brushing our teeth a couple of times a week with our non-dominant hand can be effective.

### 4) Make and maintain connections with friends, family members or colleagues.

Loneliness is a significant risk factor for developing mental health problems.<sup>5</sup> By reaching out and making a meaningful connection with people who share common ground, ideas and values, we can develop a sense of belonging. Having good support networks in place,

through family, friends and colleagues protects our mental health.

### 5) Be physically active in a way that works for you.

Physical activity enhances our mental health.<sup>6</sup> Take steps to try to build regular physical activity into your week. Do this in a way that's safe & right for you. Even the smallest amount can make a difference. Evidence shows that people who exercise experience fewer days of poor mental health. The largest associations have been seen for durations of 45 minutes, 3 – 5 times per week and in team sports, cycling and gym activity.<sup>7</sup>

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