

September 2024

Getting older and retiring both involve a change in lifestyle for most people. Whilst for many this is positive for others it may lead to loneliness or a loss of identity. Admitting that times are emotionally tough isn't always easy and asking for help can be even harder. Talking about how you are feeling and your emotions isn't a sign of weakness, if you feel you are struggling with your mental health you need to ask for help. Feeling down or anxious will impact your family as well as yourself and can stop you enjoying life.



If you think a friend or relative is experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, try to talk to them about it. There are various ways you can help them, such as:

- Offer your support, listen and reassure them that how they're feeling can be improved.
- Stay in touch, call or visit regularly. The risk of depression increases when people feel alone and unsupported.
- Encourage them to make an appointment with their GP or another health professional. Offer to go with them to appointments.
- Encourage them to keep active and healthy. Plan occasional outings to get them out of the house.

Supporting a relative or friend with depression can be both rewarding and stressful, so ensure you also look after your own wellbeing.

## How to improve your mental wellbeing

Making positive change is important, especially during uncertain times, but it's difficult to know where to start. Do one thing today, whether it's going for a walk, learning a new skill or doing something creative, taking the first steps to getting support for yourself, or reaching out to someone else, take the opportunity to do just one thing.

Evidence suggest there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

**1. Connect with other people** - Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. There are lots of ways you can build stronger and closer relationships. Spending time with others helps you to build a sense of belonging and provides emotional support, this could be going for a walk, meeting for a coffee or lunch, or just talking on the phone.

**2. Be active** - this is great for both your physical and mental wellbeing. Physical exercise can help to build your self-esteem as well as reduce anxiety and improve your mood. When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins which help to make us feel energised, happier, and less stressed.

**3. Take notice** - paying more attention to the present can improve your mental wellbeing. Click [here](#) to try mindfulness.

**4. Learn new skills** - continued learning though life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interactions and a more active lifestyle.

**5. Give to others** - research suggests that acts of giving and kindness and being part of community life can improve your mental wellbeing.



## Other tips include:

**Get plenty of sleep:** Sleep helps regulate the chemicals in our brain that transmit information. These chemicals are important in managing our moods and emotions and an imbalance in those chemicals can result in us becoming depressed or anxious. Read our sleep guide [here](#).

**Eat well:** A balanced diet that is good for your physical wellbeing is also good for your mental wellbeing. Your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well. Read our healthy eating guide [here](#).

**Avoid alcohol:** The numbing effects of drinking are only temporary and can often lead to mental health issues. It's advised that if you do drink, that you stay within the governing bodies recommended unit guidelines.

**Keep in touch:** It's good for you to catch up with friends and family face to face or over the phone.

**Take a break:** A change of scenery or pace is good for you.

**Do something you're good at:** Enjoying yourself can help beat stress

**Care for others:** Supporting others uplifts you as well as them.

**Ask for help:** If at times, life gets too much for you, it's important that you speak to someone about how you're feeling, this may be a family member or trusted friend, your GP, or a professional organisation, see the list at the end of this guide for details.



## Coping with Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of stress, panic, worry or fear, which can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, you may feel worried and anxious about having a medical test or moving house. During times like these, feeling anxious is perfectly normal.

Some people find it hard to control their worries. If your feelings of anxiety are affecting your daily life, then it's important to talk to your GP and get help.

There are many symptoms of anxiety including, a faster heartbeat, headaches, chest pains, sweating, feeling tearful, insomnia, and compulsive behaviour.

If you are feeling anxious, the following strategies may help you reduce your anxiety:

**Breathing exercises** - stop and take a breath, try breathing techniques like box breathing or baby breath.

**Talk** - friends and family can help support you through how you are feeling. You may also want to consider talking to a professional counsellor.

**Keep active** - deal with your problems more calmly. Go outside to exercise, as fresh air and spending time in nature can really help. Exercise can help clear your head.

**Sleep** - will give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.

**Nutrition** - eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.

**Do something you enjoy** - spending time doing something you enjoy will take your mind off how you are feeling, this could be as simple as having a bath or reading a book.

**Keep a diary** - write down your worries and concerns. This may help process your thoughts and emotions.

**Be kind to yourself** - don't be too hard on yourself, look for positives in your life and make time for self-care.

**Music** - can have a powerful effect on your mood. Happy or relaxing music can directly impact the way you feel.

**Mindfulness** - can help reduce anxiety; it can also give you the space to respond calmly under pressure.

**Try alternative therapies** - there are many types that you can try, these include yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, reflexology, and acupuncture.



## GETTING HELP:

### NHS

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)

[www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)

### AGE UK

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

[www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru)

[www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland)

[www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland)

### CITIZENS ADVICE

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

[www.cas.org.uk/](http://www.cas.org.uk/)

[www.communityni.org/](http://www.communityni.org/)

[organisation/citizensadvice-northern-ireland](http://organisation/citizensadvice-northern-ireland)

### GOV UK

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)

[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

### Mind

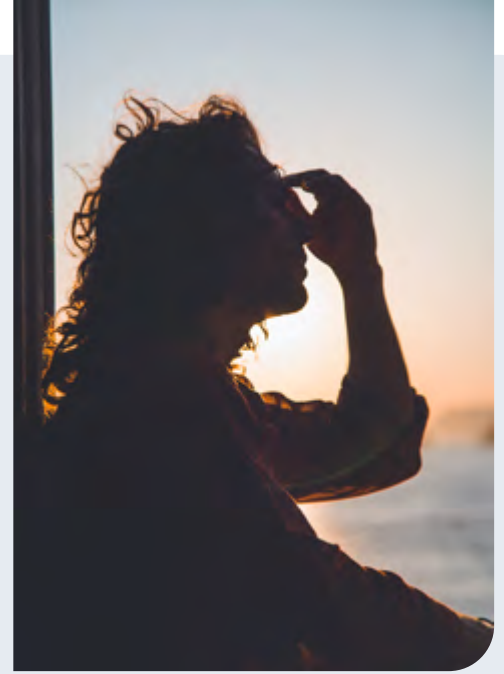
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

[Samaritans](http://www.samaritans.org)

[Cruse Bereavement Care](http://www.cruisebereavementcare.org)

Your GP



## Police Mutual Services

Worrying about money can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions. Police Mutual are here to help.

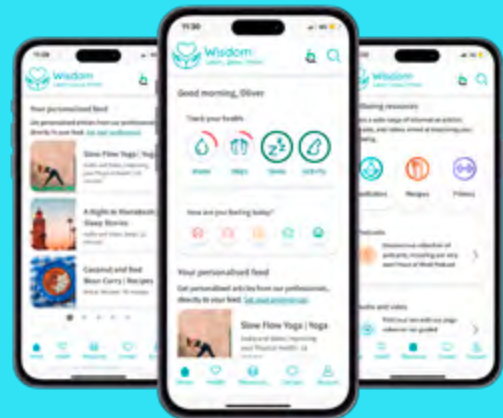
We've teamed up with **PayPlan\***, one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call **PayPlan\*** on **0800 197 8433**.

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support. Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

## Wisdom App



Download the **Health Assured App** and register today - your code is **MHA107477**

# Police Mutual

To read more of our wellbeing guides take a look at the wellbeing pages on the NARPO website.

Visit [policemutual.co.uk](http://policemutual.co.uk)



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