Essex County Council
Adult Social Care

The Art of Self Care

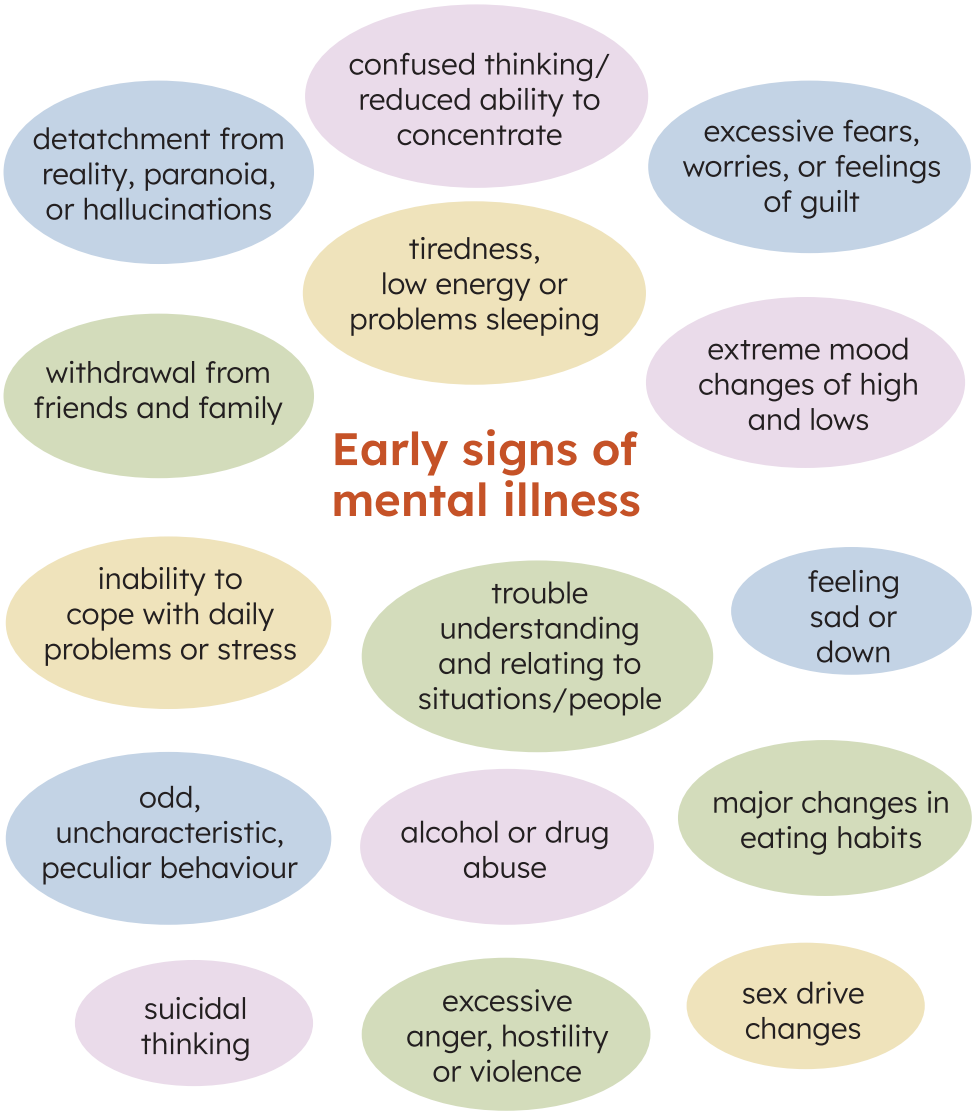
A GUIDE TO LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF



Providing early help to Essex residents focussed on promoting wellbeing and helping people to regain control.

WAYS TO WELLBEING FOR EVERY DAY

This booklet has been put together by ECC Adult Mental Health Wellbeing Team. It is for everyone and contains information to empower individuals by providing an opportunity to explore, manage and maintain their own mental wellbeing.



MYTHS and FACTS

The many different myths around mental health problems contribute to the stigma that many people still face. It's important we challenge these myths to be able to understand the true facts around mental illness.

MYTH:	FACT:
Mental health problems are rare.	1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem, this means someone you may know may be struggling with mental illness.
I can NOT do anything to support someone with a mental health problem.	There are many things you can do to make a difference to their life; Check in, Listen and don't judge, Treat them in the same way, Ask twice.
People with mental illness are not able to work.	People with a mental illness hold down a successful job. We all probably work with someone experiencing a mental health problem.
You cannot recover from mental health problems.	They may not go away forever, but many of people with mental health problems still work, have families and live full lives.
People with mental illness are usually violent and unpredictable.	Most people with mental health problems even those with severe ones like Schizophrenia are not violent. Someone with a mental illness is more likely to be a victim of violence rather than inflict it.
People experiencing mental health are weirdos and not normal.	For a lot of people experiencing mental health difficulties there is usually a root cause, trauma and/or stress in a person's life. Therefore, this is not a weird or abnormal emotion, it is a normal response matching the experience.
Young people just go through ups and downs as part of puberty – it's nothing.	1 in 8 people young people will experience a mental health problem.

Connect • Be Active • Take Notice • Keep Learning • Give

Connect:

Being well connected and sociable with people around us is good for wellbeing and mental health. Develop positive relationships with your family, friends and neighbour's that enrich your life every day. Going out and mixing with other people will help you.

Be Active:

Stop focusing on your worries and fears. Plan in more time to be sociable, join a club or meet new people. Consider old friendships you would like to remake. Physical activity can improve wellbeing, reduce anxiety and depression. Aim to be active every day and minimise the amount of inactive time. Over a week aim to accumulate at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity activity eg. 30 minutes on at least five days. Find an activity you enjoy and that suits your mobility and lifestyle. Build exercise into your daily life.

Take Notice:

Taking notice, being aware and mindful is associated with positive mental health and wellbeing. Take time to notice and appreciate nature, every-day life and moments. Be aware of the world around you and how your body responds to this and what you are feeling. Pause and reflect. Learn to recognise signs of poor mental health and stress in yourself, your friends and family: changes in sleep or eating patterns, angry for no reason, difficulty concentrating and making decisions.

Give • Keep Learning • Take Notice • Be Active • Connect

Keep Learning:

A lifestyle that values learning is positively associated with mental health and wellbeing. Try something new or rediscover an old interest. Take on a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Think about what you would like to learn, what your interests are and what would be useful in your life. You can access books and other resources to support your wellbeing through your library.

Give:

People who enjoy giving and are open to receiving have improved mental health and wellbeing. Do something nice for a neighbour, friend or family member. Thank others who give you their time. Smile more. Enjoy helping friends and doing things to help other people like volunteering or fundraising for a local charity.



Eat well to feel well • Avoid Alcohol and Drug misuse • Sleep well to feel well

Eat Well to Feel Well:

Eat 3 meals a day to maintain blood sugar levels and mood. Missing meals can lead to low blood sugar, irritability and fatigue. Eat 5 or more fruit and vegetables, wholegrain bread, cereals and pasta these contain Thiamin (B1) folate and zinc to help control mood. Two or more portions of fish weekly, especially oily fish rich in Omega 3 and Protein for brain health.

To control mood: fish, meat, eggs, milk, cheese, nuts, lentils and beans. To manage weight: limit foods high in fat, sugar and limit fizzy drinks.

Further info: www.eatwell.gov.uk, www.enjoyhealthyeating.info

Avoid Alcohol and Drug Misuse:

There is a close link between alcohol and drug misuse and our mental health and wellbeing.



Sleep Well Feel Well:

Sleep keeps us healthy and feeling well.

Here are some simple tips to get a good night sleep:

- Go to sleep in a dark, cool room the same time and get up at the same time every day. If you are still awake after 15 mins get up and do something that relaxes you.
- Avoid watching TV or using electronic devices an hour before bed.
- Begin rituals that help you relax before bed: warm bath, reading, listening to soothing music.
- Avoid drinking caffeine after 6pm and alcohol as it disturbs sleep patterns.
- Get some exercise everyday.
- Have a pen and paper or your worry diary next to your bed.

Further info: www.calm.com

7 Habits of Mindfulness



1. **Abandon your mental automatisms**
   Awaken a **Higher level of consciousness**.

2. **Focus on what's important**
   Avoid distractions that divert you from your goals and hinder your performance.

3. **Live in the present**
   This is the key to **happiness** and **high performance**.

4. **Embrace pain**
   Pain **is a part of life.** Don't avoid it or flee from it and you'll manage it better.

5. **Don't believe your mind or your thoughts**
   Question the truth of your thoughts and emotions; the brain's interpretation can be less than rigorous.

6. **Accept life as it is**
   This doesn't mean passively resigning yourself to your fate: it's a proactive stance that **implies a profound inner change**.

7. **Learn to relate to yourself**
   In a **kinder** and more **compassionate way**.



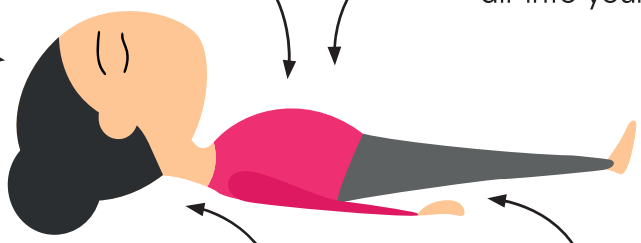
By Javiercarril. Professor in the Executive Coaching and Management Program at IE Business School.

Belly breathing

Supports the life skill of relaxation

Automatically slows the heart rate,helping to relax and calm

The most efficient and relaxed way of getting enough air into your lungs

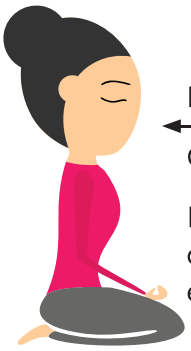


Can boost energy levels with a few minutes of relaxation throughout the day

Increased awareness of the breath and its effect on the body

Emulates breathing during the regenerating processes (sleep, digesting food or resting)

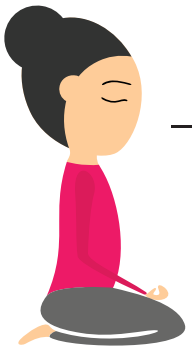
7/11 breathing



Breath in

Count 1 – 7

First count from one to seven on each ‘in’ breath



Breath out

Count 1 – 11

Then, counting at the same rate, count from one to eleven on each ‘out’ breath

Information courtesy of **www.childreninspiredbyyoga.com** and **www.blocktherapy.com**

Grounding is a very simple and powerful tool to help you:

Reduce anxiety • Lower feelings of stress • Take back control

Grounding with your five senses

What are...		Idea...
5 things you can see		The sun Picture on the wall People walking
4 things you can feel		Wind blowing Feet on the floor Pencil in hand
3 things you can hear		Birds chirping Clock ticking Car horns
2 things you can smell		Food from the cafeteria Laundry detergent on clothes Freshly cut grass
1 things you can taste		Mint Breakfast Toothpaste

Information courtesy of **www.teacherspayteachers.com**

Avoid these anxiety triggers lurking in your fridge



Too much caffeine can increase anxiety since caffeine stimulates the body's **"fight or flight"** response. These symptoms typically occur when people consume **four or more cups of coffee.**



Sugar can create changes in the body by destabilising brain activity-which heightens **symptoms of anxiety** and can even **trigger anxiety attacks.**



Alcohol changes levels of **serotonin** in the brain.

Serotonin is a **feel-good chemical** for the body.



Eating foods with too much salt **increases blood pressure,** which requires the heart to **pump harder.** When that happens, the body releases the stress hormone **adrenaline** which paves the way for **anxious feelings.**



Studies show a **connection** between processed food and an increase in **anxiety levels.** Another study showed a link between a diet of **processed and fatty foods** and depression.

Information courtesy of **www.northwestpharmacy.com**

Ways to support friends and family with mental illness



1. Check in regularly

It's good to check in once or twice a week to see how they are feeling.

2. Steer clear of judgemental language



- It's not a big deal
- You'll get over it
- Stop worrying so much
- Move on already

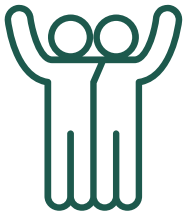


3. Listen

Be an understanding ear. Your loved one could benefit from being heard, feeling loved and not being alone.

4. Treat with tender love, empathy, compassion, respect and care





5. Offer support

Simple things may be difficult for your loved one during tough times, you can offer support by asking:

- Are there any everyday tasks I can help with?
- Do you want to go to a support group together?
- Do they need a ride anywhere?

Information courtesy of @HENRITHEBIPOLAR

NHS Tested Apps Library for Mental Health Issues

Be Mindful
An online course to help reduce stress and anxiety using mindfulness-based cognitive therapy
£30.00

Beat Panic
Overcome panic attacks and anxiety wherever you happen to be
£0.99

Big White Wall
Get round-the-clock support from therapists to help you cope with stress and anxiety
Free

BlueIce
This app helps young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm
Free

Calm Harm
Reduce urges to self-harm and manage emotions in a more positive way
Free

Catch It
Learn to manage negative thoughts and look at problems differently
Free

Chill Panda
Use breathing techniques to help you relax more, worry less and feel better
Free

Cove
Create music to reflect emotions like joy, sadness and anger to help express how you feel
Free

Cypher
An anonymous social network where you can share your feelings and receive support
Free

distrACT
Quick and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts
Free

Further Info: **www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health**



Feeling Good: positive mindset

Use audio tracks to help relax your body and mind and build your confidence

Free, with in-app purchases



Ieso

Connect confidentially and securely with mental health therapists using instant messaging

Free in some areas



MeeTwo

A safe and secure forum for teenagers wanting to discuss any issue affecting their lives

Free



My Possible Self: The Mental Health App

Learn how to manage fear, anxiety and stress and tackle unhelpful thinking

Free, with in-app purchases



SilverCloud

An eight-week course to help you manage stress, anxiety and depression at your own pace

Free



Sleepio

An online sleep improvement programme, clinically proven to help you fall asleep faster

Free in some areas



Sleepstation

Connect with a team of sleep experts to help you fall asleep or stay asleep through the night

Free with GP referral



Stress and Anxiety Companion

Breathing exercises, relaxing music and games to help calm your mind and change negative thoughts

Free, with in-app purchases



Student Health App

Reduce your worries, feel more confident and get the health information you need as a student

Free



Thrive

Use games to track your mood and teach yourself methods to take control of stress and anxiety

Free

Websites

www.calm.com

Helpful Podcasts

- Good Life Project
- Happier with Gretchen Rubin
- Daily Boost
- Happy Place
- Ted Talks Daily

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

Jane Goodall

Other things that may help

- Gratitude
- Journaling
- Goal setting for your week ahead

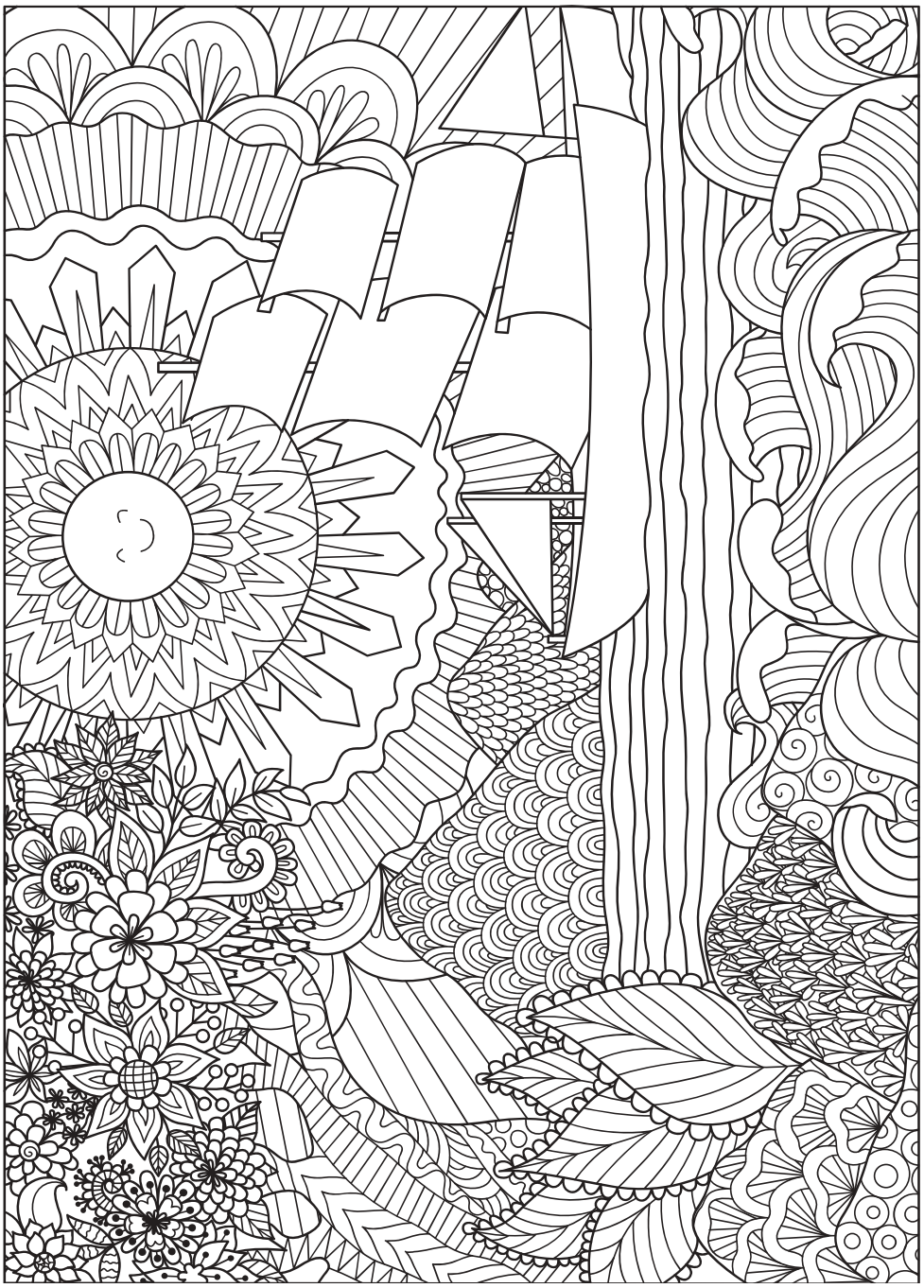
Anxiety? Stress? Low mood? Depression?

The Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Team are here for you.

If you have mental health or emotional issues, or you care for someone who does, we can provide a range of short-term support.

Contact us

by phone: 0333 032 2958 (10am – 4pm Monday – Friday)
or email: **MH.wellbeingteam@essex.gov.uk**
We can help you to improve your wellbeing and quality of life.



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This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Adult Social Care

Contact us:
MH.wellbeingteam@essex.gov.uk
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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published April 2022