

# Mind and body are one system



The words 'mental health' can make people think it is all about what's in your head. But we can't separate the mind from the body – they are one and the same system

*Taking care of our physical body is a key part of caring for our mental health.*



## 1. Get Active

Being active is about sitting down less and moving about more. It doesn't have to mean running marathons – there are lots of ways to become more active – going for a walk, doing some housework, or dancing are all ways to get moving.

Physical activity has a range of benefits for our mental health: improved sleep; release of hormones that improve mood and energy levels; reducing stress and relieving tension from the body. In fact, physical activity has so many benefits for our mental health that exercise is often prescribed by doctors as a first line treatment for depression.

## 2. You are what you eat



*Our eating habits have a big impact on our mood and improving your diet can help you to improve your mood, increase your energy and help you think more clearly.*



### **Eat regularly**

If your blood sugar drops you might feel tired, irritable and low in mood. Starting the day with a proper breakfast, eating regularly throughout the day and choosing foods that release energy slowly (like rice, oats, whole grain bread) will all help.

### **Balance your diet**

A balanced diet should contain fruits, vegetables, protein and healthy fats. Five portions of fruit and vegetables a day help provide the minerals, vitamins and fibre your body needs. For healthy digestion have plenty of fibre, fluid and exercise regularly.

### **Manage caffeine**

Caffeine is a stimulant—it will give you a burst of energy, but then may make you feel jittery, anxious or crash when your energy levels suddenly drop. Caffeine is in: tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and many other fizzy drinks. Try switching to decaffeinated drinks, especially in the evenings before bed.

## 3. Get good sleep

*Sleep is an essential part of feeling well, but almost everyone experiences problems sleeping sometimes. There are a few simple things we can do to support good sleep, so you can wake up refreshed:*

### **Look after your body clock**

Our sleep cycle is regulated by our 24 hour body clocks so what we do in the day is important for sleep. Being in natural outdoor light, especially when you first wake up helps us sleep better at night.



Keep active in the day with regular exercise and avoid napping as much as possible as this confuses our body clock. Try to establish a routine by going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time every day. Even on the weekends!

### Wind-down time

Try to have a cut-off time for caffeine in the evenings and in the last hour of your day spend time winding down before bed. This could be by switching off from screen activities; doing something you find soothing or using a relaxation or breathing exercise.



### Managing worries

Many people find worries come to them in bed. Try listening to something relaxing while going to sleep – some quiet music, talk radio or relaxation exercises – can help your mind have something to focus on instead of worries.

Use your best inner-coach to help redirect you when your mind gets pulled away by the worries – gently notice that you are worrying, acknowledge now is not the right time to think it through, and encourage your mind to come to focus back on what you are listening to, or just on your own breath.

Making time to think about and address worries in the day can also help prevent this sudden surge of worries. Try sorting your worries into things you can do something about now, and things you can't. Focus on those you can solve and write down a plan for what, when and how you can tackle it.

