

May  
2024

# mental health awareness



## Moving More for Our Mental Health

Staying active is crucial for our mental wellbeing, but many of us struggle to find the time to get enough exercise. This Mental Health Awareness Week let's encourage each other to find moments for movement in our daily routines. Going for a walk, putting on your favourite music and dancing around the living room, chair exercises when you're watching television – it all counts!

Mental Health Awareness Week is vital in increasing public understanding of mental health and how mental health problems can be prevented. It keeps up the pressure for change so that we collectively prioritise mental wellbeing.

Nat Clewley Clinical Manager – Wellbeing Solutions



## Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

In an era marked by information overload and constant distractions, physical exercise can serve as a powerful tool for improving mental clarity and focus. Exercise triggers the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that promote feelings of happiness while reducing stress. Whether it's a brisk walk outdoors or a yoga session at home, incorporating regular exercise into our routines can significantly alleviate stress and anxiety.

With sleep disorders becoming increasingly prevalent in the digital age, it's important to note regular exercise can also improve both sleep quality and duration, leading to better overall mental wellbeing. It can help regulate our sleep-wake cycle and promote relaxation, making it easier to both fall asleep and stay asleep.

## What's Going on This Month?



### 1st May | World Maternal Mental Health Day

Increasing awareness will improve the quality of care for women experiencing all types of PMADs, and reducing the stigma of maternal mental illness.



### 13th – 19th May | Mental Health Awareness Week

A week to encourage understanding, awareness and support of mental health issues across the country.



### 17th May | International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia

May 17th was specifically chosen to commemorate the WHO's decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

## How Can Physical Activity Help Wellbeing?

- ✓ Managing stress
- ✓ Improving sleep
- ✓ Improving your mood
- ✓ Improving confidence
- ✓ Managing symptoms of depression and anxiety
- ✓ Memory and brain functioning



## AI and Mental Health - A Help or a Hindrance?

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are showing great potential within the mental health care space, but despite the benefits, we need to be aware of the risks. A growing body of evidence suggests that AI can help with diagnosing conditions, developing therapies, and enabling more personalised approaches and treatments. Yet, this digital dawn also casts shadows of concern, highlighting issues of privacy, ethical use, and the nuanced understanding of human emotions.

Technologies like chatbots and virtual assistants, powered by AI, provide round-the-clock support to those in need, breaking down barriers of access and stigma that often encumber traditional therapy. These digital companions can offer immediate, judgement-free support, guiding users through mindfulness exercises, cognitive behavioural therapy techniques, and providing a listening ear at moments of crisis.

However, the reliance on AI for mental health support is not without its pitfalls. The impersonal nature of communication with AI systems can miss the nuanced understanding and empathetic connection that human therapists offer, potentially leading to oversimplified advice or misunderstandings. Moreover, there are significant concerns surrounding data privacy and security; sensitive personal information shared with AI systems could be vulnerable to breaches or misuse.

## Navigating the Digital Landscape

- ✓ **Start with Credibility:** Choose AI applications and platforms that are developed by reputable organisations and have proven efficacy.
- ✓ **Engage Mindfully:** Use AI tools consciously and deliberately. Reflect on the advice or support provided and consider how it aligns with your needs and values before taking action.
- ✓ **Monitor Emotional Responses:** Pay attention to how interacting with AI affects your mood and mental state. If you notice negative impacts, consider reducing usage or exploring alternative support options.
- ✓ **Understand the Limits:** Recognise the limitations of AI in understanding complex human emotions and situations. Use AI as a tool for guidance and support but seek professional help for deeper issues.

## Counselling & Advice Helpline

Your counselling & advice helpline covers a variety of personal and workplace issues such as:

- ✓ Anxiety or depression
- ✓ Everyday financial or legal struggles
- ✓ Workplace stress

This service is paid for by your employer and is provided by an independent company, Wellbeing Solutions. There is no cost to you and all calls are confidential.



24/7 freephone:  
**0800 328 1437**  
[employeeassistance.org.uk](https://employeeassistance.org.uk)



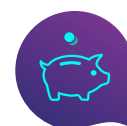
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