

Mental Health and Well-being Advice & Support

In some ways, mental health is just like physical health; everybody has it and we need to take care of it when there is something wrong.

Positive mental health is a state of well-being, when you are able to think, feel and react in the ways that enable you to engage in the work and activities that you enjoy, whilst being able to cope with the normal stresses of life. All of us experience ups and downs in our mental health at some point in our lives, but if you experience a period of particularly poor mental health, you might find that the way you are thinking, feeling or reacting becomes increasingly difficult to cope with. This can feel horrible, and be just as distressing as a physical illness.

There are many different types of experiences associated with poor mental health, with feelings of intense worry (anxiety), low mood, negative or racing thoughts, appetite (eating) and sleep problems being some of the most common experiences.

Self-Care

Often day to day self-care techniques and a few general lifestyle changes can help to promote positive mental wellbeing. Here are some top tips for looking after your mental health:

- **Talk to someone** – Talking is a great way to help ease the feelings of low mood, worry or stress. Talking to a close friend, trusted adult or family member is highly recommended, and regular ‘check-ins’ are a great way to start a conversation around how you’re feeling
- **Connect with others** – Try to spend time with friends and family, but if this is not possible, you can connect with others in your local community or those you have an interest or hobby in common with
- **Eat well** – A good, balanced diet incorporating lots of fruit and vegetables is important for promoting well-being and good mental health
- **Get a good nights sleep** – Ensure that you establish a good sleep routine, including trying to go to bed and waking up at roughly the same time every day. This could also include spending time relaxing before bedtime, avoiding caffeinated & alcoholic drinks before bed, and having some ‘screen-free’ time
- **Take regular exercise** – It’s likely if you are reading this that you are exercising through your tennis, but it is worth saying that regular exercise is helpful in promoting well-being and positive mental health
- **Relaxing activities** – find some ‘me-time’ and engage in activities that you enjoy and help you to relax, and that are not linked to work, performance or competition. Some ideas include; reading, having a bath, getting outside, cooking, exercising, spending time with a pet or practicing mindfulness.

Seeking support

Whilst sport and exercise can be extremely positive for mental health and well-being, striving for high performance can at times create a lot of pressure, whether you are playing, coaching or watching from the stands, and it is often normal to feel a degree of anxiety - especially around competition. However, if you experience prolonged periods of worry, low mood or unexpected changes in your sleep pattern, appetite, feelings or behaviour, it could indicate a need to seek additional support.

Experiencing difficulties with our mental health can often be frightening and confusing, and people can often feel embarrassed about seeking support. However, the key thing to remember is that many people will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their life, and most people will recover and be able to manage it with appropriate support. It is therefore important to access the right support and/or treatment as early as possible.

We recommend that if you are experiencing any feelings of continued low mood or worry, that you seek help from your GP initially. They are best placed to be able to support you and discuss and recommend options for treatment.

If you feel unable to go to your GP for any reason, it is important you let someone know how you are feeling. You can always call the Samaritans or Childline in confidence, who are available 24/7.

- Samaritans - 116 123
- Childline - 0800 1111

Additional support and advice

There are many fantastic organisations that offer advice and support for people in relation to their mental health and we recommend the following:

- Mind – www.mind.org.uk
- Young Minds – www.youngminds.org.uk
- Minded – www.minded.org.uk
- Minded for Families – www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk

Apps like Headspace, Calm, Thrive and Calm Harm can all help to support good mental health on a daily basis.