

Mental health challenges and finding strength



World Suicide Prevention Day is a reminder to highlight the importance of mental health. We'll cover how to recognise the signs of mental health struggles, how to support loved ones, and effective strategies to maintain your **personal mental wellbeing**.



Recognising the signs of mental health struggles

Mental health issues can be hard to spot. People often hide their feelings, fearing judgement or not wanting to worry others. But recognising the signs can make a big difference.

Feeling sad or down for long periods is a common sign. **It's normal to feel sad sometimes**, but if the feeling doesn't go away, it might be more than just a bad day. Losing interest in things once enjoyed is another sign. This could be hobbies, socialising, or even work.

Changes in sleeping or eating habits can also indicate mental health problems. Sleeping too much or too little, losing appetite, or overeating are all red flags. **Noticeable weight changes** can be a sign too.

People struggling might also **withdraw from social activities**. They might stop going out, avoid friends, or seem isolated. Mood swings, irritability, or emotional outbursts can also be signs of deeper issues.

Physical symptoms should not be ignored either. Headaches, stomachaches, or other unexplained aches and pains can be linked to mental health. **Feeling tired all the time**, despite resting, can be a sign as well.

If you notice any of these signs in yourself or someone else, it's important to **take them seriously**. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and ignoring these signs can lead to more serious problems down the line.

How to support loved ones

Supporting someone with mental health struggles can be challenging, but your help can make a significant impact. It's important to **approach the situation with empathy and understanding**.

First, create a **safe and non-judgemental space** for them to talk. Let them know you're there to listen and support them, without offering unsolicited advice or solutions. Sometimes, just knowing someone is there can be a huge comfort.

Encourage them to seek professional help

Gently suggest **speaking to a doctor or mental health professional**. Offer to help them find resources or go with them to appointments if they need support.

A photograph showing the backs of two women with long, wavy, reddish-brown hair. They are wearing white sweaters and are embracing each other. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue sky.

Be patient

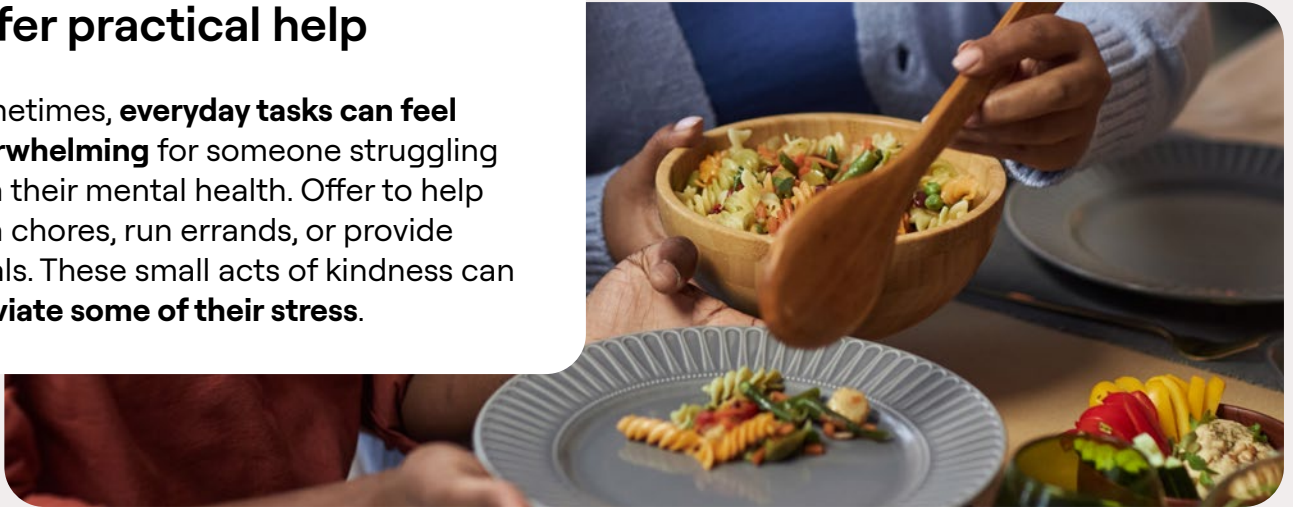
Recovery can take time, and there will be ups and downs. It's important to **remain supportive and patient** throughout their journey. Avoid making them feel rushed or pressured to get better quickly.

Educate yourself about mental health

The more you understand, the better you can support your loved one. There are many **resources available online and in books** that can provide valuable insights.

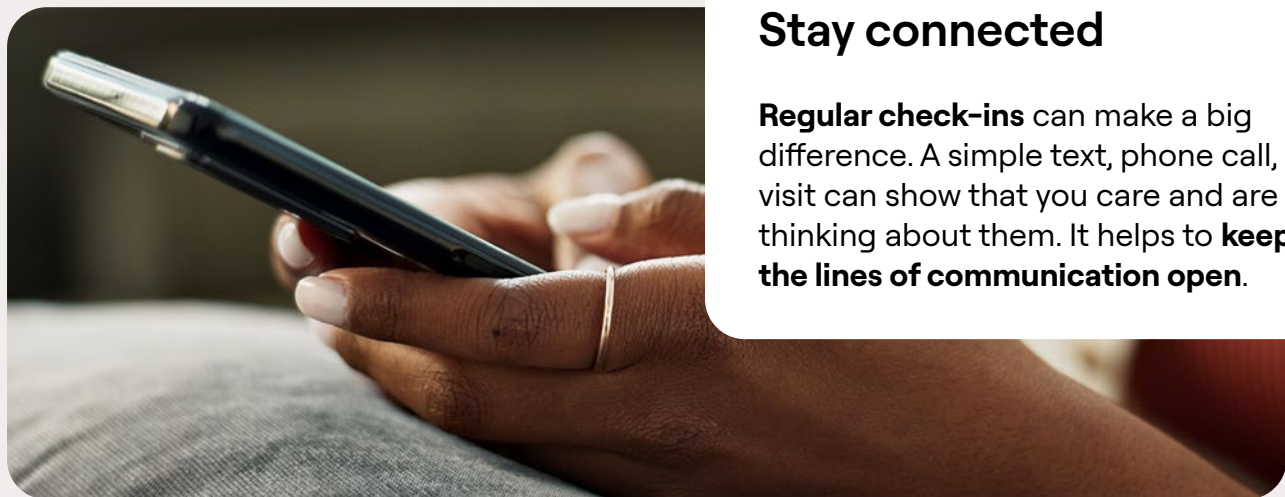
Offer practical help

Sometimes, **everyday tasks can feel overwhelming** for someone struggling with their mental health. Offer to help with chores, run errands, or provide meals. These small acts of kindness can **alleviate some of their stress**.



Encourage positive habits

Gently suggest activities that can improve their mental wellbeing, like exercise, healthy eating, or spending time in nature. **Be mindful not to push too hard**, as this can sometimes have the opposite effect.



Stay connected

Regular check-ins can make a big difference. A simple text, phone call, or visit can show that you care and are thinking about them. It helps to **keep the lines of communication open**.

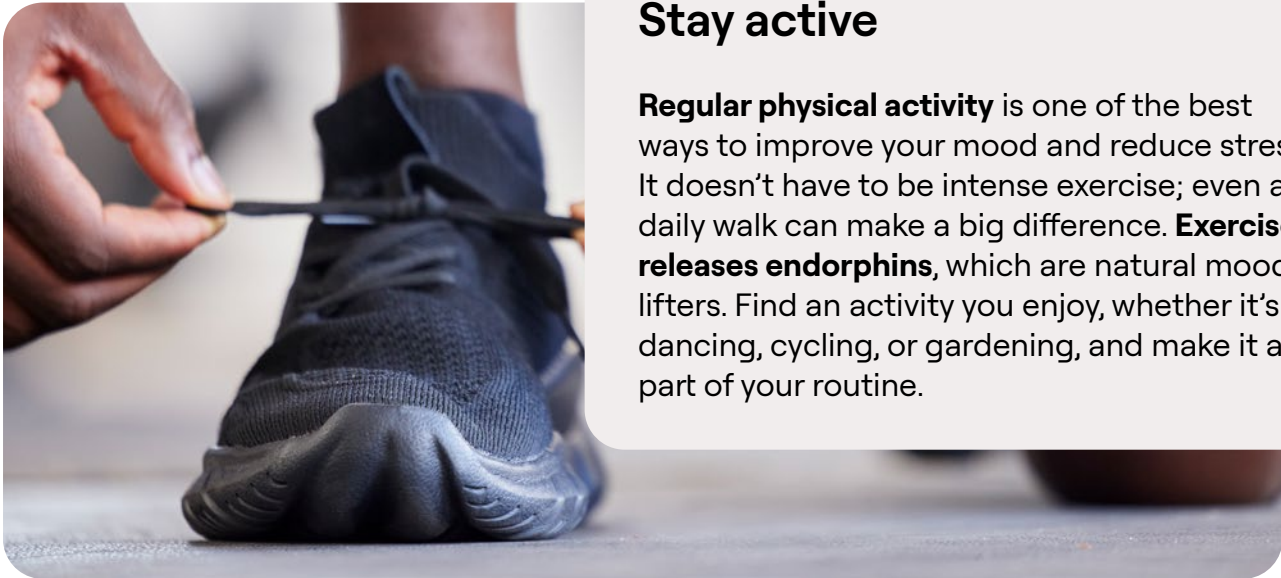
Take care of yourself too

Supporting someone with mental health struggles can be draining. Make sure you're also **looking after your own mental and physical health**. Seek support if you need it, whether from friends, family, or a professional.

Remember, you don't have to have all the answers. **Just being there and showing you care can be a huge source of comfort** for someone going through a tough time.

Effective strategies for maintaining your personal mental wellbeing

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as looking after your physical health.



Stay active

Regular physical activity is one of the best ways to improve your mood and reduce stress. It doesn't have to be intense exercise; even a daily walk can make a big difference. **Exercise releases endorphins**, which are natural mood lifters. Find an activity you enjoy, whether it's dancing, cycling, or gardening, and make it a part of your routine.

Eat a balanced diet

What you eat can affect how you feel. **A balanced diet** with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can improve your mental health. Try to limit sugary snacks and drinks, as they can lead to energy crashes and mood swings. **Drinking plenty of water** is also important to keep your body and mind functioning well.

Get enough sleep

Sleep is crucial for mental health. **Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night.** Establish a regular sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. **Create a relaxing bedtime routine**, such as reading a book or taking a warm bath, to signal to your body that it's time to wind down.



Connect with others

Social connections are vital for mental wellbeing. Spend time with friends and family, and don't hesitate to reach out if you need support. **Joining clubs or groups with shared interests** can also help you meet new people and build a support network.



Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques can help you manage stress and stay grounded. Practices such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and yoga can reduce anxiety and improve your mood. Even just **taking a few minutes each day** to sit quietly and focus on your breath can be beneficial.

Set realistic goals

Setting and achieving goals can give you a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Break larger goals into **smaller, manageable steps**. Celebrate your progress, no matter how small, and don't be too hard on yourself if things don't go as planned.

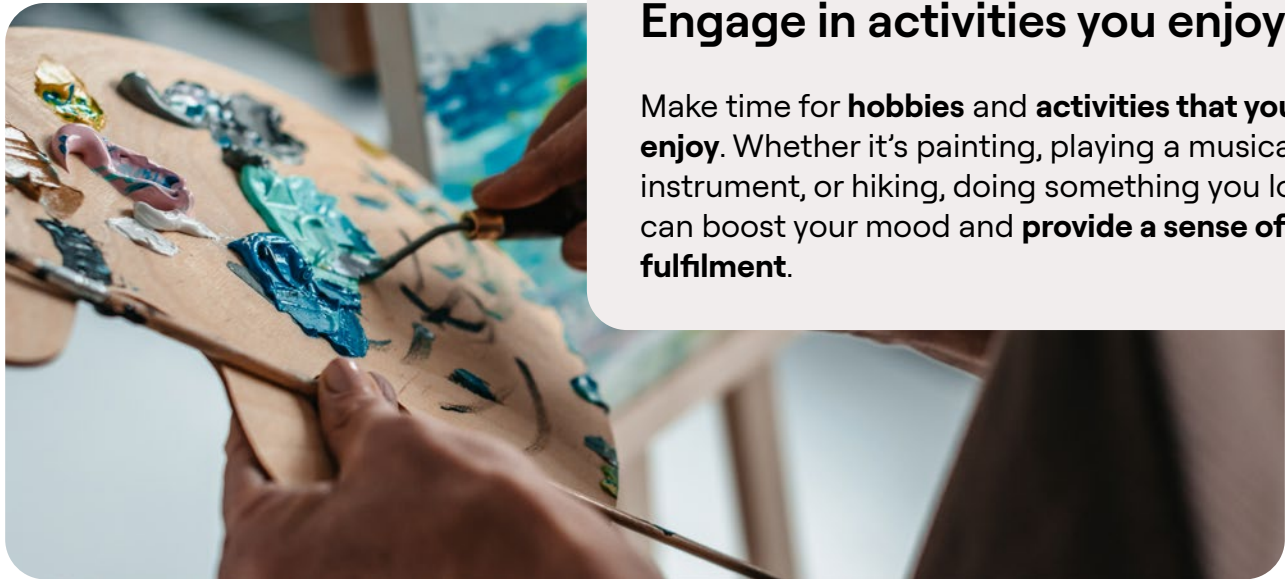
Limit screen time

Spending too much time on screens, especially social media, can negatively impact your mental health. Try to **limit your screen time** and **take regular breaks**. Spend more time on activities that don't involve screens, such as reading, cooking, or spending time outdoors.



Seek professional help if needed

If you're struggling with your mental health, **don't hesitate to seek professional help**. A doctor or mental health professional can provide support and guidance. **Therapy** and **counselling** can be very effective in helping you manage your mental health.



Engage in activities you enjoy

Make time for **hobbies** and **activities that you enjoy**. Whether it's painting, playing a musical instrument, or hiking, doing something you love can boost your mood and **provide a sense of fulfilment**.

Practice gratitude

Focusing on the positive aspects of your life can improve your mental wellbeing. Try keeping a **gratitude journal** where you write down things you're thankful for each day. This practice can help shift your focus from what's going wrong to what's going right.

Avoid alcohol and drugs

While it might be tempting to use alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, they can actually make things worse. They can lead to dependency and worsen mental health issues. If you're struggling, **seek healthier coping mechanisms** and **professional support** if needed.



Practical insights for managing stress and emotional health

Managing stress and emotional health can be tough, but there are simple steps you can take to make it easier.



Understand your stress triggers

Know what causes you stress. Is it work, relationships, or something else? Identifying these triggers helps you tackle them better.



Keep a stress diary

Write down when you feel stressed and what caused it. Over time, patterns may emerge. This can help you find ways to handle your stress more effectively.



Practice self-compassion

Be kind to yourself. If you're having a hard time, don't be too harsh. Treat yourself with the same kindness you would offer a friend.



Maintain a routine

Having a regular routine can provide stability. Plan your day with a mix of work, relaxation, and fun activities.



Stay active

Exercise is a great stress-buster. Even a short walk can lift your mood and reduce anxiety.



Connect with others

Talk to friends or family regularly. Even a quick chat can make a big difference. Staying connected helps you feel supported.



Take breaks

Don't forget to take breaks throughout your day. Step outside, stretch, or simply relax for a few minutes. This can prevent burnout.



Set boundaries

Learn to say no when needed. It's okay to put your needs first sometimes. Setting boundaries can reduce stress.



Focus on what you can control

Life can be unpredictable. Focus on the things you can control and let go of what you can't. This mindset can help you feel more at ease.



Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness can help you stay present and calm. Simple techniques like focusing on your breath or listening to your surroundings can reduce stress.



Remember, **seeking help is a sign of strength**, and small steps can lead to big improvements in mental health. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, **don't hesitate to reach out** for professional help.