

Beat the winter blues

Your winter wellbeing guide Self care and resilience



Your new year wellbeing plan

Welcome to the final Beat the Winter Blues guide. At this time of year, it's natural to reflect and start making plans for the future. Whether you're keen to set new goals or are happy to go with the flow, it's important to check in on your health and wellbeing so you're ready to tackle whatever the year might bring.

In recent years it's been especially difficult to plan ahead, but a resilient mindset and support network can help you stay at your healthy best both at work and at home. Here are our top tips to help you set your expectations and make positive changes that will boost your wellbeing for the year ahead.



Self improvement through self care

In these turbulent times it can be challenging to perform at your best. If you've been supporting friends and family through the pandemic, it's easy to neglect your own wellbeing while you focus on helping others. Fitness and healthy eating may slip down the priority list, especially when your usual routine is disrupted.

When it comes to your health, remember the in-flight safety guidance: put on your own mask before assisting others. If you're worried that a health problem might impact your ability to work or care for your family, it's important to catch it early so you can get back on your feet as soon as possible. The better you look after yourself, the better you can help those who need you.

Most GP practices now offer telephone appointments, making it easier to schedule around your work and family commitments. Remember your GP can help with both physical and mental health, so even if your worry seems minor, it's always worth checking for your peace of mind.



1 in 4 people
make New Year's
resolutions



Small changes make a big difference

Many of us start the new year with health-related resolutions. While this motivation can be useful, don't put too much pressure on yourself to make big changes.

Set realistic expectations for yourself by making one or two smaller adjustments. For example you could:

- **Start a gratitude diary**
Boost your mood by writing down three things you are grateful for each morning.
- **Reduce your screen time before bed**
Turning off your TV and phone will help you get a better night's sleep.
- **Make a healthy food switch**
Try swapping white bread for wholemeal or adding an extra portion of veg to each meal.
- **Schedule some me time**
Plan an hour of self care once a week. It could be a relaxing bath or an online yoga class.

Keep your ideas simple and achievable, and don't try to change too much at once. Remember a small habit you can stick to is better than a grand one that doesn't last!



Find your online support

According to a 2020 study by Mind, just over one in five adults – with no previous history of mental health difficulties – reported that their mental health had become poor or very poor. Recent years have seen us separated from our social circles and working in new ways. Since many of our interactions now take place from a distance or via videocall, it can be more difficult to nurture real connections.

Remember that social media shows a limited view of people's lives, so be wary of comparing yourself to others. Try to avoid doomscrolling, where you find yourself seeking out negative news and viewpoints which are detrimental to your mental health. Instead, try reaching out to start a conversation and reconnect with the person behind the feed.



On average we spend almost 2.5 hours on social media each day



Getting the balance right

While a bit of pressure can drive us to reach our goals, too much strain can make us anxious and frustrated, eventually leading to burnout. On the other hand, you may find that the changing seasons disrupt your energy levels, resulting in a winter slump.

If you're feeling unmotivated, try to create proactive energy habits which build stability into your day. Bear in mind the four pillars of performance: mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery. Whether it's building better sleep habits, eating a healthy breakfast or scheduling a five-minute workout, small changes can keep your energy levels stable and make it easier to bounce back when things get tough.



Wellbeing round-up

We hope our Beat the Winter Blues guides have helped you discover some new tips and resources for your own wellbeing journey.

We'll leave you with the Five Ways to Wellbeing, which provide easy steps to help you look after yourself and connect with your community.

Connect

Remember the importance of relationships. This can be friends, colleagues or chatting with someone new.

Be active

Physical activity can help boost your mood, reduce anxiety and keep your body at its best.

Take notice

Being present in the moment makes you feel in sync with the world around you. It could be as simple as organising your space or stopping to enjoy a sunset.

Learn

No matter your age, it's always fulfilling to pick up new skills. Try reading a new book, joining an online class or tackling a sudoku.

Give

Reaching out to others makes you feel like part of the community. Acts of kindness can boost your own self-worth, and you might just make someone's day!

Useful links

- [Mind.org.uk: self-care tips](https://www.mind.org.uk/self-care-tips)
- [Centre for Mental Health: resilience at home](https://www.centreformentalhealth.org/resilience-at-home)
- [Optimise your stress for productivity](https://www.optimiseyourstressforproductivity.com)
- [Westfield Health blog](https://www.westfieldhealth.com/blog)
- [Five Ways to Wellbeing report](https://www.westfieldhealth.com/five-ways-to-wellbeing-report)

Support and advice

Westfield Health 24 Hr Advice & Information Line

Available to health cash plan customers 24 hours a day on 0800 092 0987.

DoctorLine™

If you're struggling to reach your GP, our 24/7 DoctorLine™ is included in all health cash plans.

Wellbeing webinars

On topics including emotional wellness and dealing with change. Get in touch for details.

Beat the Winter Blues: 5-minute feedback

Click here to let us know what you thought of this series to help shape our future wellbeing guides. We'd love to hear your suggestions.