

Inspiration Point Factsheet:

Winter Wellbeing



The stresses of life can often be heightened by the turning of the seasons, when the days grow shorter and temperatures decrease. Even at the best of times, winter can feel endless, testing our physical and mental wellbeing. It is normal to feel a drop in our mood during the winter months. During this time, it's important to look after our mental health and wellbeing, talk to those around us and reach out for help when we need it.

If you find the colder months hard on your mental health, there are some simple steps that we can all do to stay mentally well:

Stay connected

It's tempting to remain cooped up when the weather is so chilly but staying connected with friends, family and colleagues is extremely important. A simple text can make a difference to someone who is struggling – it lets them know you're thinking about them. Small gestures can have a big impact. You could make a phone or video call or meet up with that friend you've not seen in a while (if it's safe to do so). Checking in and supporting others boosts your own wellbeing and at the same time helps brighten someone else's day.

Look after your mind and your body

When we are feeling low, we are more likely to crave comfort foods that help to boost serotonin. Eating a healthy, balanced diet can help to keep you feeling both mentally and physically well, and so, too, is exercise. It may be cold outside, but wrap up warm and take a walk or jog in the great outdoors. If you are unable to get outdoors, try signing up to an online class. Finding ways to stay active can really help boost your wellbeing and beat those January blues.

Build a routine

Winter can be a very busy time, from work- to family-related commitments, things can feel overwhelming. The more we see our lives getting busier, the more important it can become to stick to a regular routine. Make time to pause and take notice of what's happening now, and not dwell on the past or stress about the future. Schedule time to do the things you enjoy. Building these healthy habits around routine will help reduce feelings of worry and stress.

Value sleep

Sleep is one of the most important components of day-to-day happiness. It is key to our physical and emotional wellbeing as it heals our bodies and brains. A good bedtime routine boosts focus, mood and the immune system, keeping us in top form. Set a time when you want to go to bed for- log off from your devices, pick up and read a book or practice mindfulness before you go to bed. This will help put you in the right frame of mind for a healthy slumber and when your alarm starts ringing in the morning and it's still dark and cold outside, you will feel like you have got a good night's sleep and well rested for the day ahead.

Stay informed whilst protecting your wellbeing

As the Covid-19 situation continues, a lot of us will be overwhelmed by information we are watching on the news and reading across our social media. It is normal to have feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, guilt, loneliness, and confusion. Social media helps you stay in touch with people, but, for some, it can induce anxiety, especially during a pandemic. Think about taking a break or limiting how you use social media.

Stay informed with current events but ensure that you are basing your actions and thoughts on facts, not emotions. NHS guidance on the coronavirus is constantly updated. If this leads you to feel worried or stressed, focus on positive distractions instead.

Reach out for support

The winter months can bring a lot of feelings and emotions. We have all experienced a lot of change of the past 2 years, so it is natural to be feeling sad, anxious, worried and stressed. If you feel you need to speak to someone, seek support.

Reach out and speak to your **GP or call Inspire's Infoline on 0808 189 0036** for information and signposting support. You can also find helpful resources and self-help tools on www.covidwellbeingni.info

If you are in crisis, you can call **Lifeline on 0808 808 8000**. Calls to Lifeline are **free** to people living in Northern Ireland who are calling from UK landlines and mobiles.

Lifeline counsellors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to listen and help, **in confidence**.

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