

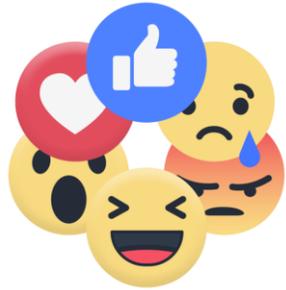
Introduction to mental health day

Physical and Mental Health

What is mental health?



Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.



It affects how we think, feel and act.

What does good mental health look like?



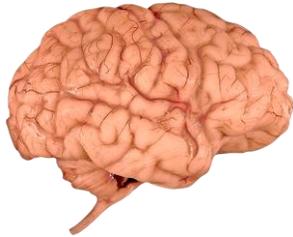
Positive mental health lets you:

- Realise your full potential (all the things you CAN do!)
- Cope with stress
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to your communities

How are mental and physical health linked?



Poor mental health is linked with a higher risk of physical health problems,



AND poor physical health is linked with a higher risk of mental health problems.



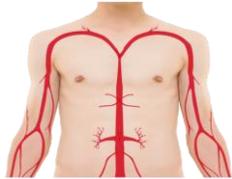
This can be for lots of reasons, the brain and body are linked in lots of ways...

[Wheel of Well-being on Vimeo](#)

What are the links?



Stress



Stress releases a chemical called 'Cortisol' into your blood, that can effect your body in lots of ways...

[The Long-term Effects of Stress – YouTube](#)



Sometimes stress can make you want to do things that make you feel worse, like **smoking**.



'Nicotine' is a substance in cigarettes that releases 'dopamine' in your brain. Dopamine makes you feel good, but smoking cigarettes stops your brain from naturally producing dopamine.

What are the links?



Diet – eating healthy, nutritious food can help you to feel less sluggish.



Some nutrients in healthy food (like omega 3, found in fish) have been found to ‘protect’ your body against some mental health problems, like schizophrenia.



Some foods are also linked to inflammation in your gut and your brain, reducing a chemical called ‘Serotonin’, which is linked to depression.

What are the links?



Exercise – it takes between 10 and 30 minutes to release 'endorphins' in your body from exercising. Endorphins are a chemical that make you feel good. They have been found to have similar effects to anti-depressant drugs!



Self-esteem – self-esteem is how you value yourself. Low self-esteem might lead to mental health problems like anxiety or depression. This is why it is so important to do things that make you feel good!



Help-seeking behaviours – if you are feeling tired or upset, you might not want to go to the doctors to get help, or you might not know where to go.

What are the links?

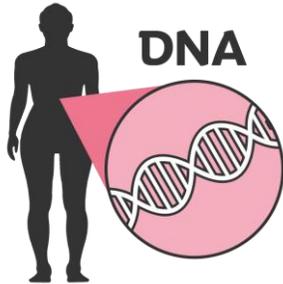


Sleep - poor sleep can increase the risk of having poor health, and poor health can make it harder to sleep.

A good night's sleep helps with physical, mental and emotional resilience (recover quicker).



Some studies have suggested that people with learning disabilities are **nearly twice as likely**, compared to the general population, to develop a mental health problem.



This can be for lots of reasons:

- Biology and genetic factors: pain, illness or medication can cause poor mental health
- Negative life events: abuse, deprivation, poverty
- Fewer resources: lack of social support (like friendships), reduced coping skills, job opportunities
- Other people's attitudes: stigma and discrimination (hate crime)



Why mental health problems aren't always recognised



- A gap between mental health and learning disability services
- Assessments to detect mental health problems in people with learning disabilities are not always well developed
- Symptoms are sometimes thought to be due to the learning disability, rather than a mental health problem
- Staff supporting people might be less likely to think of a mental health framework when trying to understand behaviour

This is why services like Lewisham Speaking Up are helpful, because we can support you to get your voice heard and get help for your mental or physical health, if you feel like you need it.