

# Mental health and wellbeing advice

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week and each day we will be giving tips on how to maintain good mental health for you and others. Today's topic is...

## Doing good does you good

**Evidence shows that helping others is actually beneficial for your own mental health and wellbeing. It can help reduce stress, improve your emotional wellbeing and even benefit your physical health.**

### Helping others...

- creates a sense of belonging and reduces isolation
- helps keep things in perspective
- helps make the world a happier place
- makes you do more for yourself
- builds your confidence and self-esteem.



### How can you help at the current time?

- look out for your neighbours - do they need any essential supplies or even just someone to talk to?
- check on someone you know who is going through a tough time
- call a friend or relative you haven't spoken to for a while
- support and recommend local businesses
- you could volunteer for a local community group, food bank or charity.



You can download the **free** 'Doing Good Does You Good' **guide** from  
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/)

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## How to look after your mental health

Mental health is everyone's business. We all have times when we feel down, stressed or frightened. Most of the time those feelings pass, but sometimes they develop into a more serious problem, and this could happen to any one of us.

### 10 top tips...

1. **Talking about your feelings** can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled.
2. **Keep active** - Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and feel better.
3. **Eat well** - Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.
4. **Drink sensibly** - We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness, but the effect is only temporary.
5. **Keep in touch** - There's nothing better than catching up with someone. Give them a call, drop them a note, or chat to them online.



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### 10 top tips continued...

- 6. Ask for help** - None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel. If things are getting too much for you, ask for help.
- 7. Take a break** - A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a five-minute pause, a lunch break from work, or time outdoors.
- 8. Do something you're good at** - What do you love doing? Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.
- 9. Accept who you are** - It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence.
- 10. Caring for others** is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you.



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## How to manage and reduce stress

Stress is a feeling of being under abnormal pressure. This pressure can come from different aspects of your day to day life. You may find that it has a cumulative effect, with each stressor building on top of one another.

Stress affects us in a number of ways, both physically and emotionally and in varying intensities.



### How can I identify the signs of stress?

Some common signs and symptoms to look out for, are:

- feelings of constant worry or anxiety
- feelings of being overwhelmed
- difficulty concentrating
- mood swings or changes in your mood
- irritability or having a short temper
- difficulty relaxing
- depression
- low self-esteem
- eating more or less than usual
- changes in your sleeping habits



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## Three steps to take when feeling stressed:

### 1. Realise when it is causing you a problem

Try to make the connection between feeling tired or ill and the pressures you are faced with. Look out for physical warnings.



2. **Identify the causes** Sort the possible reasons for your stress into three categories 1) those with a practical solution 2) those that will get better given time and 3) those you can't do anything about.



3. **Review your lifestyle** Could you be taking on too much? Are there things you are doing which could be given to someone else?



## Seven steps to help protect yourself from stress:

### 1. Eat healthily

### 2. Be aware of smoking and drinking alcohol

### 3. Exercise

### 4. Take time out

### 5. Be mindful

### 6. Get some restful sleep

### 7. Don't be too hard on yourself



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## How sleep affects us and how to sleep better

Good sleep doesn't just mean lots of sleep: it means the right kind of sleep. Sleep affects our ability to use language, sustain attention, understand what we are reading, and summarise what we are hearing. If we compromise on our sleep, we compromise on our performance, our mood and our interpersonal relationships.

### HEAL – The four pillars of good sleep

There are four main factors that affect the quality of your sleep:

1. **Health**
2. **Environment**
3. **Attitude**
4. **Lifestyle**



#### Health

- Physical health problems can stop you from getting a good night's sleep. Speak to your GP or pharmacist about appropriate medication.
- Mental health problems like anxiety and depression can also affect sleep. In these cases, a combined approach to tackle both the mental health issue and the poor sleep is often the most effective method of treatment.



#### Environment

- Common factors that can affect our sleep are light, noise and temperature.
- Be mindful of the presence of computers, phones, tablets and TVs. The backlit 'blue light' displays suppress melatonin production – the hormone that helps you sleep.



## Attitude

Lying awake in bed, particularly before an important day, can make us worry. This worry then makes it harder for us to get to sleep.

- Instead of staying in bed and getting more frustrated, you could get up and make yourself a warm drink and return to bed when you feel sleepier.
- If you continue to have sleep problems for more than a month, you could try mindfulness or speak with your GP about the possibility of using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).



## Lifestyle

There are a number of things that you can do every day to improve the quality of your sleep.

- Eating rice, oats and dairy products can produce chemicals that increase our desire to sleep. However, food and drink containing lots of caffeine or sugar can keep you awake.
- Although it can make you feel tired and can help you get to sleep, alcohol often impairs the quality of your sleep and makes you more likely to wake up during the night as the effects wear off.
- Exercising on a regular basis is thought to help us sleep, as, among other things, it can help to reduce anxiety and relieve stress.
- Exercising earlier in the day is better, as exercise increases the body's adrenaline production, making it more difficult to sleep if done just before bedtime.



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# Mental health and wellbeing survey

Thank you to everyone who participated in our recent survey. Hills will donate £300 to Wiltshire Mind - a mental health charity providing help and support in the region.

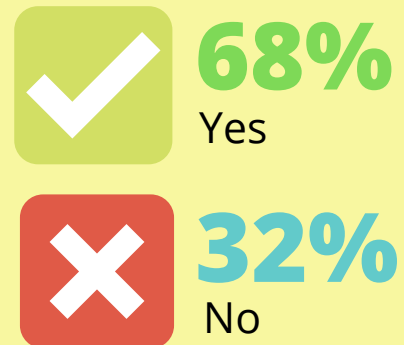
## The results

The survey was for **all employees** to **anonymously share how you were feeling** at the current time and the **results will help us** provide you with relevant information in the future. The following results are from employees who completed the survey and not reflective of the whole workforce.

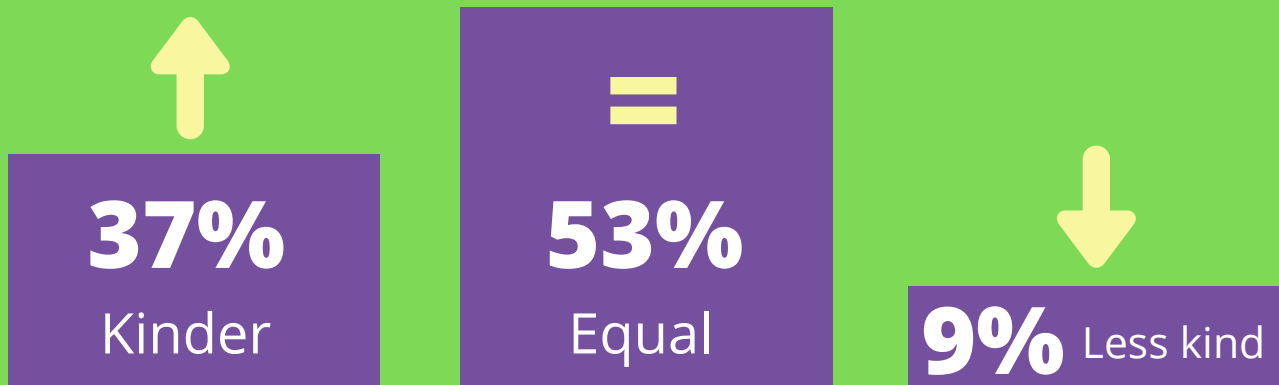
### How are you feeling at the moment?



### Did you find the recent emails with tips and advice about mental health, useful?



### Do you believe people in Britain will be more or less kind following the recovery of the Coronavirus pandemic, than they were before the pandemic?





# Mental health and wellbeing survey

**Were you already aware of Hills' employee assistance programmes, Simplyhealth and Health Assured?**

**YES 83%**

**NO 17%**

**Would you contact Simplyhealth or Health Assured if you needed assistance with a health or wellbeing concern?**

**YES 76%**

**NO 24%**

**Hills employees have access to employee assistance programmes which offer services for our health and wellbeing, such as free counselling and advice.**

## **This includes:**

- 24 hour helpline available where you can speak to someone straight away who may be able to help instantly
- If your issue needs more formal support, structured counselling sessions, either over the telephone or face-to-face can be arranged.



## **Contact:**

### **Simplyhealth:**

[www.simplyhealth.co.uk](http://www.simplyhealth.co.uk)

Tel: 0800 9753347

or

### **Health Assured**

(for Wiltshire Council and FCC transferred employees only):

[www.healthassured.org](http://www.healthassured.org)

Tel: 08000 305182

