



**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
AWARENESS  
WEEK**

11-17 MAY 2026



**ACTION**

**FOR YOURSELF.  
FOR SOMEONE ELSE  
FOR ALL OF US.**

**TOOLKIT**

## **This Mental Health Awareness Week we're focusing on action for good mental health.**

We've put together some of our best, evidence-backed tips in this toolkit to inspire people to try a quick wellbeing boost or stick at a healthy habit with a view to making lasting changes.

Different things will work for different people, so it's worth trying a few approaches to find those that work best for you.

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# ACTION

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MENTAL  
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WEEK

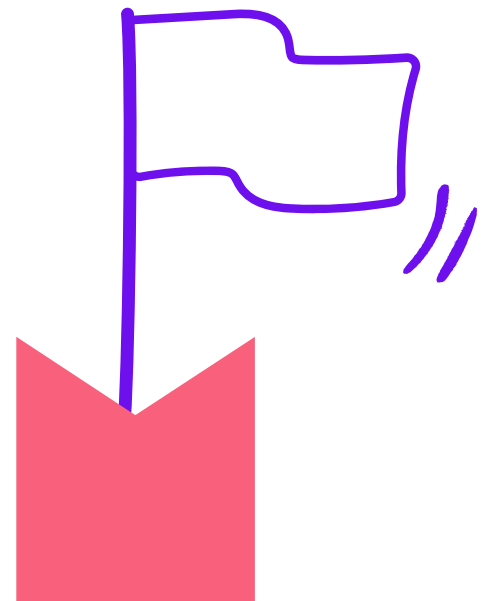
11-17 MAY 2026

## Our top ten actions to support good mental health

These simple actions may help lift your mood and improve your ability to cope with life. Try a couple and find which works best for you.

### 1. PLAN SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Making plans for things we enjoy can increase our sense of hope, which is important for our mental health. It could be a plan to sit down with a cup of tea and take a quiet five minutes, or a long-term plan for an ambitious trip. Whether it's a big or small goal, the important thing is to plan it.



### 2. EAT WELL

One of the simplest ways to improve mental health is by eating a healthy, balanced diet. Not only can it support your emotional health, but introducing small habits, such as staying hydrated or having fruit snacks, can help make changes stick easier.

### 3. GET CLOSER TO NATURE

Spending time in nature can boost your mood, lessen stress, and help you concentrate.



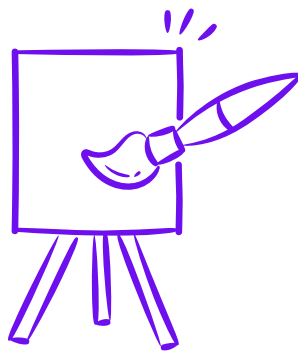
### 4. GET GOOD SLEEP

Good quality sleep helps your brain work better, lifts your mood, and is good for your overall health.



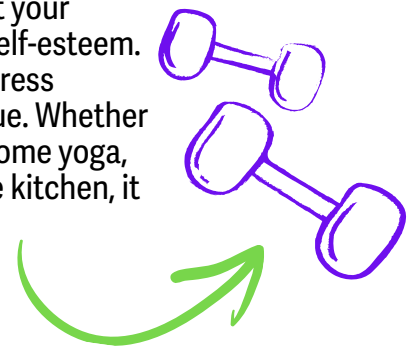
### 5. GET CREATIVE

Spending time on creative activities is a great way to help ease stress and anxiety. Carve out some time to listen to music, paint, sing, or do whatever you enjoy most.



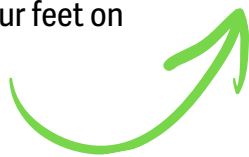
### 6. MOVE REGULARLY

Being active can boost your mood and raise your self-esteem. It's also an effective stress management technique. Whether you go for a walk, do some yoga, or vigorously clean the kitchen, it all counts.



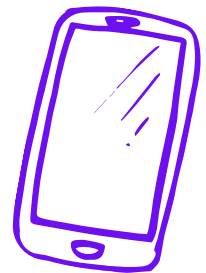
### 7. TRY MINDFULNESS

Being fully aware in the present moment can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Aim to notice the colour of the sky, the sound of leaves, or the feeling of your feet on the ground.



### 8. MAKE TIME FOR FRIENDS

Having good relationships with others can help you feel like you belong, allow you to share experiences, and receive emotional support. It's a great reason to have a catch-up with a friend on the phone.



### 9. BE KIND

Bad days happen to everyone. If you're having a tough time, remember to treat yourself with kindness and understanding. You're doing the best you can.



### 10. TALK THINGS OVER WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST

It can take a lot of courage to tell someone else how we're feeling or what we're finding hard. Just talking things through with a person we trust can feel like a relief and make us feel less alone.



Everyone deserves good mental health.  
For more tips and information visit [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

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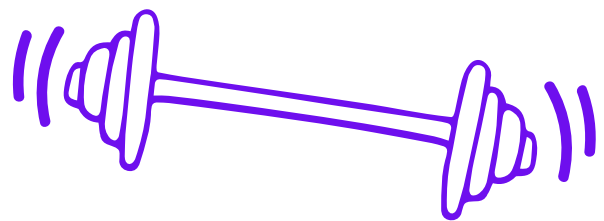
## Eight actions to improve mental health in the long term

Taking action to support your mental health can help you feel better in the present moment. But it can also have long-term benefits, helping you to manage better in the future.

Creating sustainable mental health actions that fit into your daily or weekly routine is important for making them into habits that stick. Here are eight long-term mental health strategies to help you make sustainable, positive changes to your wellbeing:

### 1. PRIORITISE YOUR HEALTH

Being physically active, sticking to a healthy, balanced diet, and getting enough sleep play a big part in maintaining good mental health as well as physical health.

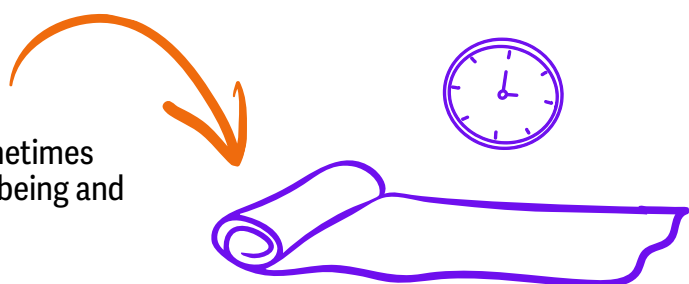


### 2. CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Regularly spending time with friends, family and loved ones is great for preventative mental health care. Staying socially connected can help you feel less lonely, allow you to share positive experiences with others, and may also lower the risk of serious health problems in the future.

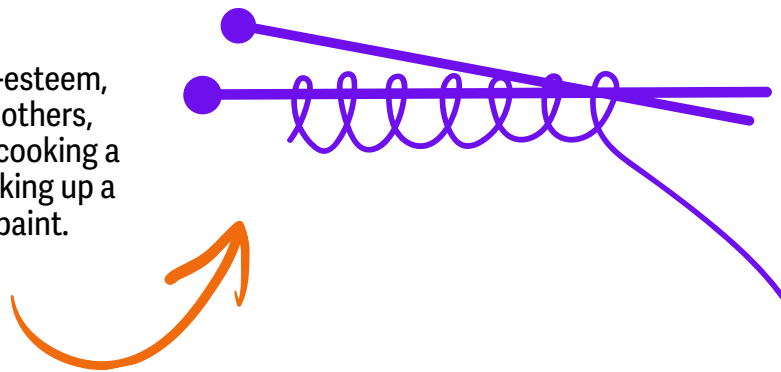
### 3. BE PRESENT

Paying attention to the present moment, sometimes known as 'being mindful', can boost your wellbeing and help you see things from new perspectives.



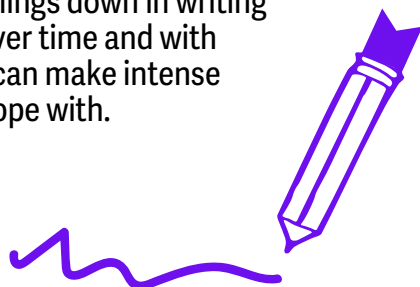
## 4. LEARN A NEW SKILL

If you're looking for ways to boost your self-esteem, build a sense of purpose, and connect with others, learning a new skill can help. You could try cooking a new recipe, working on a DIY project, or picking up a hobby that challenges you, like learning to paint.



## 5. LEARN TO UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Feeling very upset makes it difficult to think clearly, make healthy decisions or relate to others. Paying attention to our feelings and reflecting on what caused them, without judgement, can help us understand and manage them better. Putting our thoughts and feelings down in writing can help with this. Over time and with practice, these steps can make intense emotions easier to cope with.



## 6. SET BOUNDARIES:

Setting boundaries doesn't always feel easy or comfortable at first, but it can help reduce stress, prevent burnout, build self-esteem, and improve relationships overall. Think about what your personal limits and values are and let these guide you when setting new boundaries.



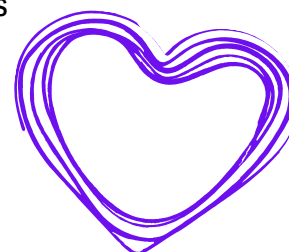
## 7. PRIORITISE SLEEP

Good quality sleep is fundamental to emotional and cognitive wellbeing. Disrupted or insufficient sleep can increase our vulnerability to stress, anxiety and depression. Simple steps like keeping a consistent bedtime, winding down before sleep and reducing screen time in the evening can all support good sleep and help you feel more resilient.



## 8. SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

If life feels overwhelming, asking for professional support may help. Talking therapies can treat many mental health difficulties and help you build emotional resilience, creating long-lasting mental health improvements.



Everyone deserves good mental health.  
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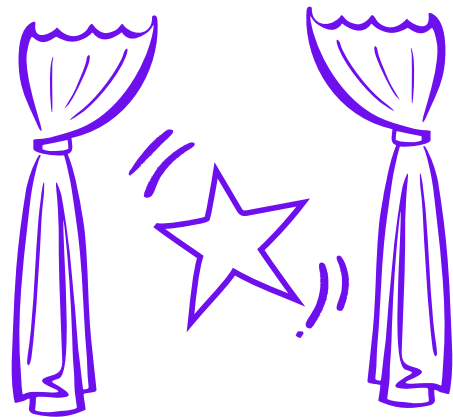
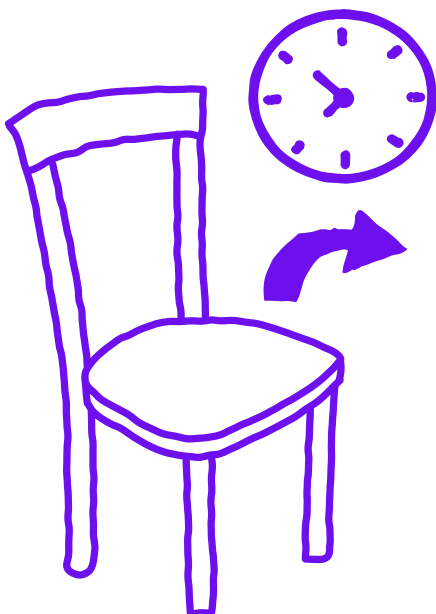
## Ten quick actions to boost your mental health

Quick, easy daily habits are a great way to boost your mood and wellbeing, even on days when your energy levels might be low.

Here are ten quick actions to try that may improve your mood and mental wellbeing.

### 1. OPEN THE WINDOWS

For a quick mental health boost, try opening your windows. Letting fresh air in and stale air out can allow natural light to come in, help you feel closer to nature and lift your mood.



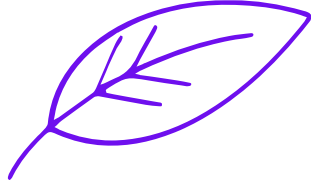
### 2. TRY CHAIR YOGA

Chair yoga lets you enjoy the health benefits of yoga while sitting down. It's a great way to reduce stress quickly, help you sleep, and improve mood fast.



### 3. HEAD OUTSIDE

Spending time in nature is linked to lower stress levels, improved mood and better concentration. Even brief outdoor activities like a walk in a local park, gardening or sitting in a green space, can provide real benefits.



### 4. TRY A MINUTE OF MINDFULNESS

When we're stressed or anxious, mindfulness can be a great way to break the cycle and bring ourselves back into the moment. You don't have to spend ages doing it to feel the benefits.



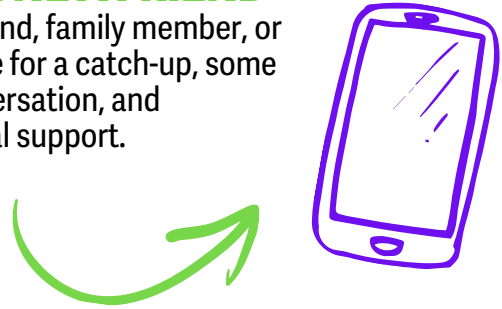
### 5. DRINK WATER

Staying hydrated can help you concentrate, improve short-term memory, and boost your overall mood, making it one of the simplest mental wellness tips.



### 6. PHONE A FRIEND

Call a friend, family member, or loved one for a catch-up, some fun conversation, and emotional support.



### 7. TRY A BREATHING EXERCISE

Deep breathing exercises can bring instant stress relief and relaxation, as well as help you get a better night's sleep.



### 8. CREATE A RELAXING BEDTIME ROUTINE

Good quality sleep helps your brain work better, improves your mood, and is good for your overall health. Having a pre-sleep ritual, something as simple as settling down in bed with a book and a warm decaffeinated drink, can help you wind down ready for sleep.



### 9. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Remind yourself each day of three things you are grateful for.



### 10. BE KIND TO YOURSELF

If you're finding it hard to cope in the moment, try not to beat yourself up. Instead, aim to appreciate or celebrate the smaller things you've done.



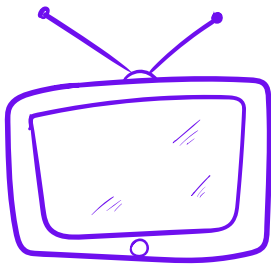
**Everyone deserves good mental health.**  
**For more tips and information visit [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)**

# Tips to manage overwhelm during global events and relentless bad news



Constantly hearing about negative news from around the world can feel like a lot to take in – and that's because it is.

Feeling overwhelmed by current events, no matter how big or small, can take a toll on our mental health. Here are some tips to help you cope with global news overwhelm and find your way back to balance.



## Set boundaries with the news

Ask yourself how much news content you're happy to take in, and how often.



## Use grounding exercises

Grounding yourself in the here and now can ease your stress response.

## Have phone-free times

If you often find yourself doomscrolling, having set phone-free times or zones could help break this habit.



## Talk with others

When you feel overwhelmed, it can help to connect with other people. You could spend some quality time with loved ones, family or friends.



## Give yourself permission to rest

Taking time to look after yourself doesn't mean you've stopped caring about anything else; it means that you are looking after yourself so that you can keep on caring.



## Focus on what you can control

Small actions still matter. Taking positive action can help shift feelings out of helplessness and into purposefulness.

# Practical ways to manage DOOMSCROLLING



It's normal to feel down from time to time when we come across bad news, but constant exposure to negative online content could negatively affect our mental health.

'Doomscrolling' is a relatively new term used to describe the impact of consuming large amounts of upsetting news online.

If you're looking for ways to spend less time doomscrolling, here are some suggestions that might help.

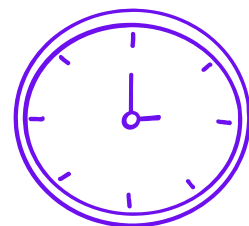
## Turn off 'push' notifications

Turning off instant alerts for social media or news apps can give you a break from anxiety-provoking information.



## Set a time limit

Setting a time limit on your scrolling can help, as long as you stick to it. Find something that gives you a gentle signal that it's time to put the phone down.



## Consider phone-free zones

You're allowed to have quality time that isn't interrupted by notifications every few minutes.



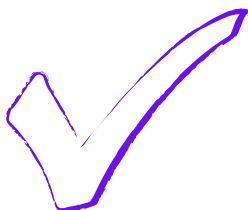
## Use a watch or an alarm clock

If you often doomscroll in bed, it may be because your phone doubles as your alarm clock. Switching to using a watch or a physical alarm clock may help.



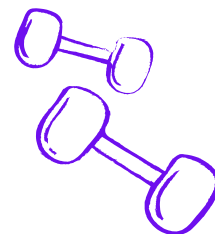
## Manage your social media feeds

You could make changes to what appears on your feed by blocking or hiding certain profiles, allowing you to limit the negative content you are exposed to.



## Balance the negative with a positive

Mindfulness, reading, spending time with others, and exercising are all great self-care activities that can benefit your wellbeing.



# Tips on moving more for your mental health, **when depression is making it tough**



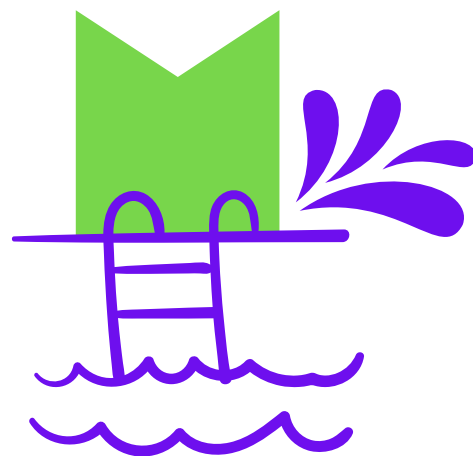
- 1 Start small, build up**
- 2 Find moments every day**
- 3 Get moving with friends or family**
- 4 Find an activity you enjoy**
- 5 Try not to compare with others**
- 6 Celebrate your achievements**
- 7 Your favourite activities**

**Everyone deserves good mental health.**  
**For more tips and information, visit [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://mentalhealth.org.uk)**

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# Five ways to get moving more in your community



1

Find activities at your local **leisure centre**

2

Join a local group for a **walk, jog, or run**

3

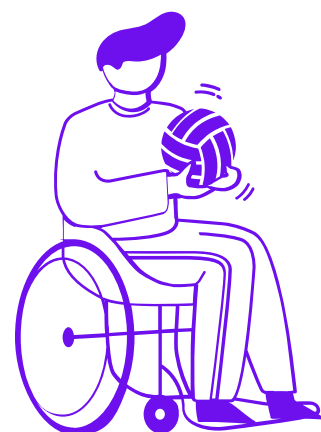
Meet people, get moving, and give back by joining a **community gardening** group

4

Spend time enjoying nature with others by joining a **rambling group**

5

Bring movement into your **social time** – swap your sit and chat to a walk and talk!



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**MENTAL  
HEALTH**  
FOUNDATION

# 10 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

From book club to art class, Swifties to gamers, volunteer groups to shooting hoops – community is good for our mental health. They help us to belong, feel supported, and have purpose.

Here are ten ways to get involved with your community and boost your mental health.

## 1. MAKE IT FUN

Choose an activity you enjoy. You could join a club or group centred around your interests.



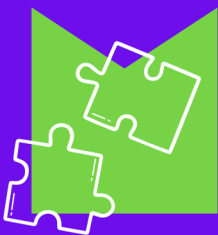
## 2. GET OUTDOORS

Get out and moving in nature for more mental health benefits.



## 3. FIND LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

Build connections with people who share your interests and values. But try to also meet people who are different from you, too.



## 4. SHOW KINDNESS TO OTHERS

Connect with your community through small acts of kindness, which will benefit both you and others.



## 5. SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

Sharing a compliment or showing appreciation can strengthen your relationships.



## 6. CONNECT ONLINE

Find others who share similar experiences or interests online. Remember, healthy online communities should make you feel safe and valued.



## 7. GIVE BACK

Helping others is a great way to build community and give you purpose.



## 8. CARE FOR YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Increase your sense of belonging by getting involved in your local community.



## 9. WELCOME OTHERS

Make new people joining your community feel welcome and included.



## 10. FIND PEER SUPPORT IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING

Connect with others going through similar experiences through peer support groups.



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# How to SLEEP BETTER



**Sleep (including the quality, quantity and timing of sleep) has a vital role for good mental health, influencing mood, focus, memory, and overall wellbeing.**

**When we sleep well, our brains process emotions more effectively to help us handle stress, our immune system functions better, and we learn and remember new information better.**

**These four pillars of good sleep can help to HEAL your sleep problems.**

## Health

As anyone who has tried to get to sleep with a blocked nose or headache knows, physical health problems can stop you from getting a good night's sleep.

Speaking to your GP or pharmacist about your sleep problem can help with this. But it's important not to take over the counter medication without first speaking to a health professional, as sometimes medication itself can stop you from sleeping properly if it's not right for you.

Mental health problems like anxiety and depression can also affect our sleep. In these cases, a combined approach that deals with both the mental health issue and the poor sleep is often the most effective method of treatment.

Speak to your GP or mental health worker (if you have one) for advice on this or have a look at the 'Attitude' and 'Lifestyle' sections of this guide for general ways to maintain good mental wellbeing.



## Environment

Our sleep environment is very important for getting good quality sleep. It's important to recognize that access to an ideal sleep environment can vary widely due to personal, social, or economic circumstances. For some, factors like insecure housing or financial difficulties can make it difficult to create the 'ideal' conditions.

Where possible, try to remove distractions from your bedroom. Keep your bedroom as your sleep room. It's better to watch TV, play computer games and eat in another room. This helps you associate your bed with sleep.

Be aware of the presence of gadgets and electronics, such as computers, phones, tablets and TVs. The stimulation associated with social media interaction and phone gaming can lead to sleep disruption or can mean you get into bed later and don't get enough sleep. It's a good idea not to use these devices in the hour before you go to sleep and do something else to wind down.

Although we are all different and have our own personal preferences, the common factors that can affect our sleep are light, noise and temperature. Too much light or noise can prevent you from falling or staying asleep. If you can't control the amount of light and noise, such as light from a streetlamp



## Attitude

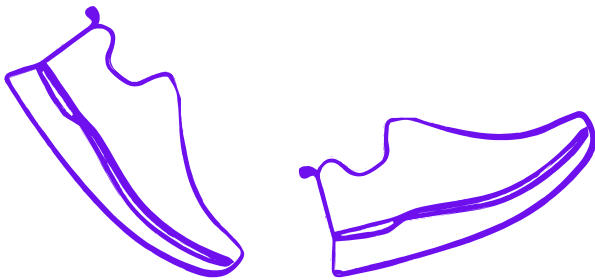
Lying awake in bed, particularly before an important day, can make us worry. However, this worry can then make it harder for us to get to sleep.

Relaxation techniques can help you unwind at these times. Alternatively, instead of staying in bed and getting more and more frustrated, it is usually best to get up and read or make yourself a warm drink (avoid coffee, tea or any other caffeine drinks) and then return to bed when you feel relaxed and sleepy again.

If you're having problems sleeping for more than a month, you could speak with your GP about the possibility of using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

CBT is commonly used to treat a lot of mental health problems. It can encourage a more positive attitude, which can help break the cycle of negative thoughts causing your lack of sleep, leading you to develop a healthier sleep pattern. In England, you can self-refer to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) (this may help reduce unnecessary use of GP time and speed referrals if talking treatments are appropriate).

Alternatively, practices like mindfulness (a type of meditation) can help by reducing stress and anxiety levels. Mindfulness can be practised without a GP prescription. Our mindfulness guide is a helpful introduction to simple mindfulness techniques.



## Lifestyle

There are many lifestyle factors that you can bring into your everyday life to improve the quality of your sleep. These include the following.

### Eating for good sleep:

Food and drinks containing lots of caffeine can keep you awake, so drinking less tea and coffee after lunch might help you to sleep better. It's a good idea not to go to bed when very hungry or very full.

### Being aware of the effects of alcohol:

Although it can make you feel tired and can help you get to sleep, alcohol impairs the quality of your sleep and makes you more likely to wake up during the night as the effects wear off. You may snore more and also need to go to the toilet frequently or get up to drink water if you are dehydrated.

### Moving more:

Exercising on a regular basis is thought to help us sleep, as, among other benefits, it can help to reduce anxiety and relieve stress. It is, however, important to exercise at the right time. Working out 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.

**These fundamentals will help increase your chances of getting a restful night's sleep.**



**Learn more about how sleep can impact your mental health in our *How to sleep better* guide.**

**Free to download from [mentalhealth.org.uk/sleep](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sleep)**

# Sleep diary

Use this diary to keep track of your sleep patterns over the course of two weeks.

Completing the diary can help you notice patterns and identify how certain behaviours and activities affect the quality of your sleep.



## What to do

- Keep this diary outside of your bedroom.
- Fill out the chart each morning. It's important to do this when you wake up rather than later in the day.
- Include a note of all activities listed opposite.
- Note the time you switched the lights out for sleep.
- Add up your total number of hours of sleep every night when you wake up in the morning.
- Mark your diary using the letters and symbols, as shown in the 'activities' and 'sleep time' boxes.

## Activities

- A** Each alcoholic drink
- C** Each caffeinated drink, includes coffee, tea, chocolate and cola
- P** Every time you take a sleeping pill or tranquilliser
- M** Meals
- S** Snacks
- X** Exercise or any out of breath activity
- T** Use of toilet during sleep-time
- N** Noise that disturbs your sleep
- W** Time of wake-up alarm (if any)

## Sleep time (including naps)

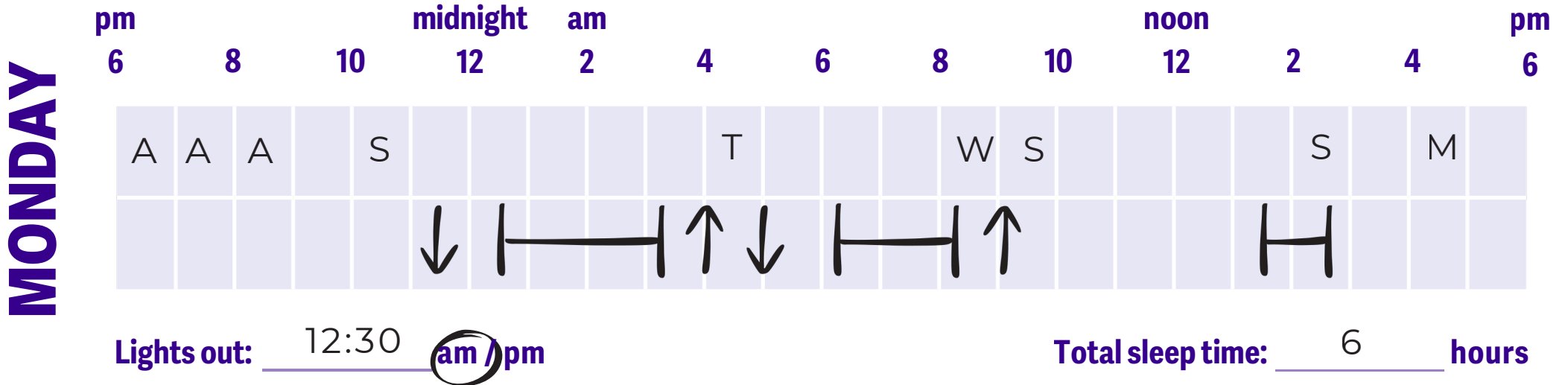
↓ Mark with a “down” arrow each time you got into bed.

↑ Mark with an “up” arrow each time you got out of bed.

— Mark with a line the time you began and the time you ended your sleep; then join the line to indicate sleep periods.

— Mark with a line the time you began and ended any naps, either in the chair or in bed in the day as well.

## Example of a completed day and night



# WEEK ONE

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

## MONDAY

pm	midnight				am	noon				pm		
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

## TUESDAY

pm	midnight				am	noon				pm		
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK ONE



Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**WEDNESDAY**

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**THURSDAY**

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK ONE

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**FRIDAY**

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**SATURDAY**

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK ONE

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**SUNDAY**

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

Comments

# WEEK TWO

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**MONDAY**

pm					midnight	am					noon					pm
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6				

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**TUESDAY**

pm					midnight	am					noon					pm
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6				

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK TWO

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**WEDNESDAY**

pm				midnight				am				noon				pm			
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**THURSDAY**

pm				midnight				am				noon				pm			
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK TWO

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

## FRIDAY

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

## SATURDAY

pm					midnight		am					noon					pm	
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

# WEEK TWO

Complete the first line with notes on your activity – note what time your activities take place.

**SUNDAY**

pm	midnight				am	noon				pm		
6	8	10	12	2	4	6	8	10	12	2	4	6

Lights out: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Total sleep time: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**Comments**



**EVERYONE  
DESERVES  
GOOD  
MENTAL  
HEALTH**

We are the only UK charity solely focused on preventing poor mental health and building and protecting good mental health.

Mental health is one of the most important foundations for a healthy and long life, and we believe **everyone deserves good mental health.**

**For short guides on different topics,  
backed by research, visit  
[mentalhealth.org.uk/publications](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications)**



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