

# *Emotional Wellbeing* *Handbook*



**HYNDBURN**

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When asked what we'd want most for our loved ones, wouldn't most of us simply answer, "I just want them to be happy"? Emotional wellbeing matters. It affects how we feel physically, how we work and therefore the valuable services we provide. Happiness isn't some fuzzy emotion. It's an attitude. It's a set of skills and techniques. 1 in 4 people will experience some form of mental health problem in any given year. That's why understanding and equipping ourselves with the tools to manage our own emotional wellbeing matters.

## *Happy, resilient people:*

- Are more motivated, energised and productive;
- Are healthier, less likely to suffer from anxiety or depression;
- Take fewer days off sick;
- Have fresh ideas;
- Keep things in perspective;
- Stay with their employers;
- Are more liked by their colleagues;
- See the positives even in difficult situations;
- Spread their happiness to those around them.

All of us have times of stress, loss, failure or trauma in our lives. But how we respond to these has a big impact on our wellbeing. We often cannot choose what happens to us, but usually we can choose our own attitude to what happens. Resilience, like many other life skills, can be learned.

## *What is resilience?*

- Being able to cope with life's problems;
- Letting go, not being weighed down by resentments;
- Accepting what you can't change;
- Able to adapt to changes at work;
- Emerging from adversity feeling stronger and more resourceful;
- Staying focused on what you're trying to achieve even when things aren't going to plan.

## *Building emotional wellbeing*

You are in charge of your own happiness and you can take action to increase your resilience. You can't always predict or control what life throws at you, but you can gain skills to help you deal with challenges, recover more quickly and learn and grow as a result. This can even lower your risk of depression and anxiety. The same skills can help you manage the fear of taking on new opportunities and so help you develop in other ways too. Here are 10 suggestions.

# 1

## *Work on happiness when you're feeling emotionally well*

The best time to work on your own happiness and resilience is when things are going well. You could think of it as being a bit like paying into an insurance policy: put the effort in when times are good and you'll be in a better position to deal with the difficult things later.

# 2

## *Deal with problems early*

It's always better to tackle issues soon after they arise, before they get worse. To begin with, this might just mean asking for some advice or talking it through with someone to help you decide what to do. Holding things in or hoping they'll go away might mean you're in pretty bad shape emotionally before getting help and then it takes much longer to feel better.



If you're finding it difficult to work with a colleague, think about whether mediation would help. We have trained mediators who can help arrange a structured, honest discussion between people who aren't getting along. This means that the decision on how to resolve the situation rests with the people concerned, rather than someone telling you what you have to do or how you have to behave. You get to tell the other person what you're upset about as well as listening to their point of view. You might not walk out of a mediation session being the best of friends but chances are you'll have an agreement on how you're going to work together in the future.

# 3

## *Get help if you're struggling*

We all respond emotionally to things that happen, or that other people say or do. It's important to recognise those feelings. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do for yourself is take time out for a good cry or go to trusted friends or colleagues for some support. Sometimes that's not enough and people need a bit more support from counselling or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This can provide a safe space and professional guidance for us to explore difficult issues and emotions, cope with crises or losses, improve relationships, or develop new ways of thinking and living.



You can contact our Employee Assistance Programme at any time, 24/7, about anything that's troubling you. It can be work or personal, relating to health, money, legal matters, caring responsibilities – anything. They can arrange counselling locally and it's all completely confidential. Just ring 0800243458, or go to [www.workplaceoptions.com](http://www.workplaceoptions.com)



### **Friendly Faces**

Here at the council we have a network of what we like to call "friendly faces". They're trained to listen and might be able to offer some advice. You can contact one of this group if you're struggling.

# 4

## *Be kind to yourself*

It's also important to accept yourself for who you are, flaws and all. Find out what your strengths are and try and use these more. Forgive yourself for mistakes of the past: you can do this by learning from them, putting right what you can and moving on.

Remember that emotions are natural human reactions, including sadness, guilt, grief and anxiety. You have to accept them before you can move on.

Try to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. Make times for the things you enjoy and the people who help you feel positive.



We have great flexible working policies including a generous leave entitlement and compassionate leave when people are dealing with caring responsibilities, family illness or bereavement.



It can be tempting to use alcohol as a way of winding down at the end of the day. This can get out of control and move into dependency or addiction. Our Drug and Alcohol Policy lists many sources of support. If you're struggling to control your drinking, it's really important to remember that you're not alone and there is help.

# 5

## *Do good to feel good*

Caring about others really helps with your own sense of wellbeing and makes you healthier. It builds stronger connections between you and other people. It doesn't have to involve money – your time, ideas and energy are just as valuable. You could:

- Make someone smile;
- Give your time to the people who matter to you – play with your kids, call a friend or relative;
- Offer to help someone;
- Give blood;
- Volunteer;
- Give your change to charity;
- Pay someone a compliment;
- Reach out to someone who's struggling and let them know you care.

# 6

## *Get active*

Take care of your body and your mind will feel better too. Exercise instantly lifts your mood, even just a brisk walk and some fresh air. Find something that you enjoy and make time to fit it into your day. Eating properly, drinking more water and getting enough sleep is really important too.



Council employees benefit from reduced leisure rates at local leisure centres and other discounted activities. See our Employee Benefits booklet for more details. Watch out for activities for staff, such as boxercise classes. Go for a lunchtime walk, maybe invite a colleague to join you.

# 7

## *Appreciate the world around you*

Stop and take notice of the beauty around you: birds singing; the smell of your favourite food; or a great view. Mindfulness helps our overall wellbeing and keeps us in tune with how we're feeling. It can stop you dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. Try to take a couple of minutes during the day to stop, breathe and be in the moment.

We can always find things to be grateful for, whatever's happening around us. These are usually the little things, because they tend to turn out to be the most important – a smile from a loved one, a favourite book or TV show, a cup of tea and a catch-up with an old friend. Try and see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty.



A useful exercise is to write down, at the end of each day, 3 good things that have happened to you. Being grateful can help people cope with stress and can even have a beneficial effect on heart rate. This action is easy to do yet its benefits have been scientifically proven. In tests, people who tried it each night for just one week were happier and less depressed one month, three months and six months later.

# 8

## *Grow and learn*

Learning opens your minds to new ideas and can be a real self-confidence booster. Having goals for the future which are challenging but achievable is really important for our happiness too.



We have lots of ways you can learn new things at work, whether it's attending a course, completing a qualification, borrowing a book from our learning library, or improving your English, maths or ICT skills. Courses are run locally outside work in all sorts of subjects. Why not contact Louise, our Union Learning Rep and OD officer, for advice on how you can find out what's available.



We have a group of people trained in coaching throughout the council and also links to external coaches. They can help you work out how to deal with a situation that's proving problematic or how to break down a goal into achievable steps.

# 9

## *Try and keep things in perspective*

Here are some useful questions you can ask yourself:

- On a scale of 1-10, how bad is this?
- In 3 months' time, how important will this be?
- Is this within your control?
- What would my most trusted friend advise me to do?
- What can I do to make this situation a bit better?
- What can I take from this situation that's positive?
- What can I learn from this and what might I do differently next time?



**Try this free online Happiness at Work survey:**

[www.app.happinessatworksurvey.com/?a=afh](http://www.app.happinessatworksurvey.com/?a=afh)

It gives you instant, confidential results and suggestions on actions you can take.

## USEFUL LINKS

Mind - the charity for better mental health: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Action for Happiness: [www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

CBT overview: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/treatments/cbt.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/treatments/cbt.aspx)

NHS self-help therapies: [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/self-help-therapies.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/self-help-therapies.aspx)

5 steps to mental wellbeing: [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx)

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org>, FreeCall : 116 123

TED talks, free talks by inspiring people: [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

Anxiety UK, user-led mental health charity: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

Citizens Advice: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Healthy Minds East Lancashire: <http://www.eastlancshealthyminds.co.uk>

Self Help Guides: <http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/>

## OUR FRIENDLY FACES TEAM...

# 10

## Deal with work stress

Stress can be a good thing. It challenges us, makes us grow and can help us be more productive. Unhealthy work-related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. It can be a significant cause of illness.

If you're feeling that aspects of your job are becoming difficult to cope with, we want to help you deal with these as soon as we can. In the past, traditional approaches to stress management have been to offer support when someone is signed off sick, or is already very upset. It's always easier to resolve things before that stage. We don't want people becoming ill because of things that happen at work. We believe that work should contribute to your happiness, not make you unhappy. Whenever you raise issues, we'll try and support you by listening to your concerns and supporting you to take constructive actions. Where we can make some helpful changes, we'll try to do that too.



If you see colleagues behaving towards other people in a way that you don't think is acceptable, check out our Dignity at Work policy for some practical advice on what to do.



Stress is an inevitable part of work. The next time you're feeling overwhelmed, try this exercise: make a list of the things causing you stress. Put them into two groups—the ones you can control and those you can't. Choose one thing that you can control and come up with a small, concrete step you can take to reduce it. Try it with another. In this way you can find your way back to a positive—and productive—mind-set.

The document on the next page is designed for you to note some aspects of your job, or relationships at work, that are proving difficult. It includes external factors too since people often find they're struggling with a combination of things. We'll use this to discuss and explore what's going wrong and what you or we can do to improve things.

You can just use bullet point / word prompts if you like, or just even underline the possible causes you think might apply to you.

### *Our discussion with you will include:*

What's going on? How long for?

What have you tried to do to make things better?

What else can you do? What can we do to help you?

### Dealing with change

- Able to ask questions and express views
- Able to influence decisions

### Getting the right support

- Given relevant information
- Encouragement from colleagues and managers
- Receive regular feedback
- Understand the policies and procedures being used

### Issues outside work

- Friends and family difficulties
- Relationships
- Bereavement
- Debt
- Health problems
- Caring responsibilities
- Life changes
- Moving house
- Other commitments and responsibilities
- Other employment
- Work-life balance

### Your Job

- Workload
- Deadlines
- Working hours
- Skills needed to do the job
- Working environment
- Safety

### Your role

- Understand how role contributes to "bigger picture"
- Clear about responsibilities and boundaries
- Feel empowered

### Your sense of control

- Able to develop new skills
- Having a say in what you do
- Using your skills and initiative

### Anything else?

### Relationships at work

- Sense of fairness
- Able to deal with conflict
- Tensions within the team
- Clear standards of acceptable behaviour
- Able to tackle unacceptable behaviour
- Feel valued