



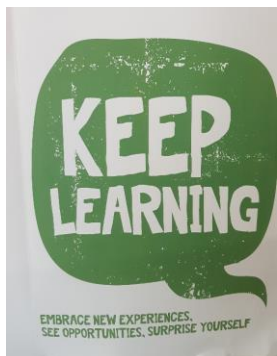
Giving is more than just the sharing of material things with others. It is about cultivating a spirit of generosity and promoting active participation in social and community life. Volunteering and community involvement has been strongly linked with positive feelings and functioning. Helping others, sharing one's skills and resources, and behaviours that promote a sense of purpose and team orientation have been found to help increase self-worth and produce a positive emotional effect. Giving is important for all age groups. It helps develop strong social cognition in children, a sense of purpose and self-worth in adults and particularly older people who have left the workforce and have time to offer.



Research shows a strong correlation between physical activity and increased wellbeing, as well as lower rates of depression and anxiety. It is now viewed as essential for people of all ages and has been shown to slow age-related cognitive decline. Evidence suggests that physical activity can increase self-belief, the ability to cope with difficult situations and provide a sense of mastery. It can also have the benefit of encouraging social interactions. Physical activity does not need to be particularly energetic to be of benefit. Moderate exertion three to five times a week can significantly reduce symptoms of depression, but improvements can also be seen from single bouts of exercise of less than 10 minutes.



Developing skills that increase awareness of what is immediately happening – both physically and mentally, within and around us – can improve wellbeing. Even short courses teaching simple techniques can enhance wellbeing for several years. Much research has been done on mindfulness, which has been shown to have positive effects that include heightened self-knowledge. It suggests that an open awareness is particularly valuable for choosing behaviours that are consistent with one's needs, values and interests. Alignment to one's values is also an effective way to ensure that behaviour change becomes embedded over time. Specific approaches that have been shown to enhance wellbeing include gratitude, forgiveness, reflection and the development of meaning



Learning, remaining curious and setting goals is important for all ages. For children, it leads to positive cognitive and social development, while for adults it can lead to improvements in self-esteem, social interaction and a more active and involved life. It has also been shown to be effective in preventing depression in later years. Adult learning in particular includes elements of goal-setting, which is strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing. This is particularly true when goals are self-generated, positively focused and align with personal values. Learning is more than just an activity for formal education. It can include any approaches to maintaining curiosity and an enquiring mind.



Feeling close to other people and valued by them is a fundamental human need. Across all ages, relationships and participation in a social life are critical for mental wellbeing and effective buffers against mental disorder. Strong social relationships are supportive, encouraging, and meaningful, and a wider social network is also important for feelings of connectedness and self-worth. The key message of Connect is that giving time and space to both strengthen and broaden social networks is important for wellbeing. The wellbeing of individuals is bound up in the wellbeing of their communities, so actions that focus solely on individual, inward looking benefits will not be as effective as those that stress the importance of fostering relationships with others.