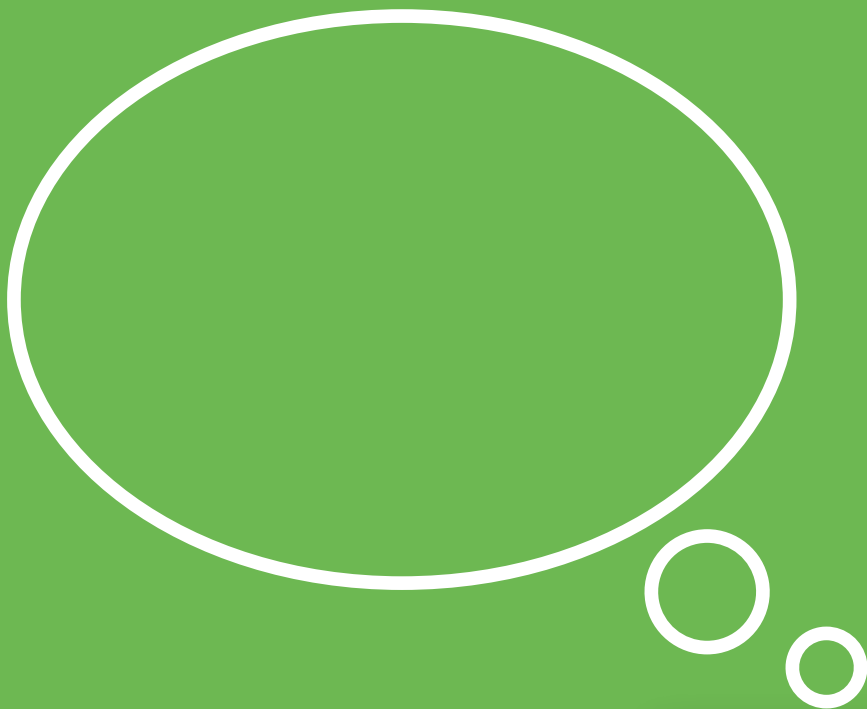






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SECTION 1

Background to CommUnity Connect

Healthy Ireland

Healthy Ireland is a Government of Ireland-led approach that encompasses a broad framework of actions being undertaken by government departments, public sector organisations, businesses, communities, and individuals to improve health and wellbeing and reduce the risks posed to future generations. It is a direct response to increasing levels of chronic illness, lifestyle behaviours that negatively impact health, and persistent health inequalities.



VISION STATEMENT *'A Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.'*



Their four high-level goals are:

GOAL 1

Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life.



SOURCE

Healthy Ireland Framework
2013 - 2025



This goal aims to address the risk factors for poor health and promote healthier lifestyles amongst the population of Ireland at every stage of life.

GOAL 2

Reduce health inequalities.

This goal is not only for interventions to target health risks but also for a broad focus on addressing the wider social determinants of health. Relevant factors here include: where people are born, grow, live, work, and age; and creating economic, social, cultural, and physical environments that support a healthy lifestyle.

GOAL 3

Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing.

This goal enforces the need to be prepared to prevent, respond to, and rapidly recover from public health threats through collaboration and partnership.

GOAL 4

Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a Healthy Ireland.

This goal emphasises the importance of empowering every individual to take ownership of their health and make positive lifestyle choices, from projects being run by community and local groups to policy and legislative changes at the highest level of government.



Healthy Louth and Healthy Meath

Healthy Louth and Meath are components of the Healthy Ireland Local Government programme delivered by Louth and Meath County Councils, respectively. The Healthy County Coordinator plays a key role in Local Authorities as it provides a central resource for driving the health and wellbeing agenda through the implementation of the National Healthy Ireland Framework at a local level.

The Healthy County Coordinator has been strategically positioned within the Local Authority (LA) for a specific reason. When you look at the wide range of responsibilities handled by a LA, such as planning, roads, infrastructure, water, housing, and homeless services, you'll notice that each of these areas directly affects the health and wellbeing of the county's residents and workers.

The approach isn't the same for everyone, and the Healthy County Coordinator needs evidence to plan effectively. This means looking at local demographics and health profiles and working closely with local people and organisations who have the knowledge and expertise.

The Healthy Ireland Fund (HIF) 2023-2025 Local Strategies for both Louth and Meath have been resourced through the Department of Health's Healthy Ireland Fund, and their development was led at county level in collaboration with the Health and Wellbeing Subgroups. The Health and Wellbeing Subgroups bring together stakeholders from both a community and health and wellbeing capacity to generate innovative solutions to address the specific health needs of the county.



Where the idea for CommUnity Connect came

To plan for the Healthy Ireland Fund Round 4, we conducted thorough public and stakeholder consultations and research in County Louth and Meath, each separately. Our main goal was to establish the health needs of the people in these counties, decide which groups are most in need of support, and explore what projects could be funded to improve health and wellbeing in the area.

This consultation and research process consisted of:

A public consultation survey.

A series of focus groups.



Desk-based research examined local and national databases and research papers on health and wellbeing in Ireland, County Louth, and Meath.



A co-design workshop



Statistics 'at a glance'

NATIONAL



23% want to see improvement

23% of the respondents in the Healthy Ireland Survey said they would like to improve their mental health

20%

A fifth of young people starting secondary school reported experiencing anxiety.

6x



Suicide rates amongst the Traveller population are six times higher than the national average.

63%

Traveller Women

VS

20%

GMS Female

63% of Traveller women said their mental health was not good for one or more days in the last 30 days, compared to 20% of GMS female card holders.



SOURCES

Healthy Ireland Survey 2021

Growing Up in Ireland Study, 2017

National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022–2027

Statistics 'at a glance'

In both Louth and Meath, the most prioritised health issue identified in the surveys, focus groups, and desk-based research was mental health.

LOCAL: MEATH

Some of the data captured pertaining to this issue in Meath included:



84%

of the respondents to the Healthy Meath survey identified mental health as the biggest health issue.

Topics such as difficulty accessing health services, depression, anxiety,



isolation, and loneliness were common themes discussed within the Healthy Meath focus groups.



1,436

of the population of County Meath had anxiety, which was higher in females aged 55-64 years.

3,289

of the population of County Meath have depression, which was higher among females aged 55-64 years and males aged 55-59 years.

SOURCE

Healthy Ireland Fund
2023-2025 Local
Strategy for Meath
County Council



LOCAL: LOUTH

Data captured pertaining to this issue in Louth included:



987 of the population aged 55+ is estimated to **have anxiety**, which is higher in females aged 55-64.

2,268 of the population aged 55+ is estimated to have depression, which is **higher** for both **males** and **females** aged 55-59 years.



207
MALES
195
FEMALES

The self-harm hospital presentation rate per 100,000 of the population of Louth during 2019 was 207 males and 195 females.

When combined across datasets, the top wellbeing and **environmental factors** identified as having **the most negative impact** on health and wellbeing in Louth were mental health, depression, and a **lack of opportunities to engage in social** and leisure activities.



55%
Over half of the respondents identified mental health as the most significant wellbeing factor.



Depression was ranked as the highest factor in respondents' second choice (33%).

Despite these issues, it was acknowledged throughout this process that there are an abundance of mental health and wellbeing organisations and community groups operating at a local level across both Louth and Meath that provide important positive mental health supports to the community. However, the development of an initiative that aims to increase awareness of these supports and organisations and their role in promoting positive mental health would be of benefit to communities across Louth and Meath.



SOURCE

Healthy Ireland Fund 2023-2025 Local Strategy for Louth County Council

What is Mental health?

Recognising that everyone has mental health is really important. It means understanding that just like we all have physical health, we all have mental health too. Sometimes our mental health is good, and sometimes it's not so great, and that's okay. When we know this, we can be kinder to ourselves and others. It helps us talk openly about how we're feeling and get the support we need when things are tough.

Mental health

Mental health is referred to as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well, work well and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and wellbeing that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships, and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right, crucial to personal, community, and socio-economic development (World Health Organisation, 2022).

Mental well-being

The term mental well-being is increasingly used inter-changeably with positive mental health. The new economics foundation suggests that our mental wellbeing includes **two elements**.

FEELING GOOD

where we experience a range of emotions and feelings at an individual level.

FUNCTIONING WELL

an element influenced by our interaction and engagement at a wider community level.



INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING?

It refers to individual wellbeing which includes:

1. How **satisfied** we are with our lives.
2. Our sense that what we do in **life is worthwhile**.
3. Our day-to-day **emotional experiences**.
4. Our **wider mental wellbeing** and the circumstances that promote it.





SOURCE

Reasons to
get help for
your mental
health -
HSE.ie



When we might need to reach out for help

There may come times when we find ourselves overwhelmed or struggling to cope with life's challenges. It's important to recognise when **we need support and reach out for help**. Whether it's feelings of anxiety, depression, or simply needing someone to talk to, **seeking assistance is a proactive step** towards healing and growth. Reaching out is a sign of strength.

Going through a difficult time can make you feel down, sad, or anxious.

You might feel overwhelmed and not be able to think straight. If you have low energy, you might lack the motivation to do your normal activities.

You might also be:

- ◆ Avoiding people.
- ◆ Having panic attacks.
- ◆ Feeling anxious that something terrible might happen.

You might not be able to shake off your mental health difficulties despite trying your usual coping strategies. Taking that first step towards getting support can be difficult. You may feel embarrassed. But it can also be the most positive move you can make.

If you're worried about your mental health,



Talk to a family member or friend.



Talk to your GP



Get Support

Try things like physical activity and healthy eating.

Mental health problems and disorders

Mental Health Problems and Disorders refer to symptoms that meet the threshold for a clinical diagnosis of mental illness or symptoms at a sub-clinical threshold that interfere with emotional, cognitive, or social function.

It is now accepted that mental health and mental ill health **are not opposite ends of a single continuum** but rather constitute distinct, though correlated, axes. Thus, **the absence of mental illness does not equal the presence of mental health**, and 'curing or eradicating mental illness will not guarantee a mentally healthy population'.

This means that a person can have a mental disorder but still flourish despite certain challenges or symptoms. It also means that the absence of a mental disorder does not necessarily indicate positive mental health because the person may still be experiencing challenges and having difficulty coping.

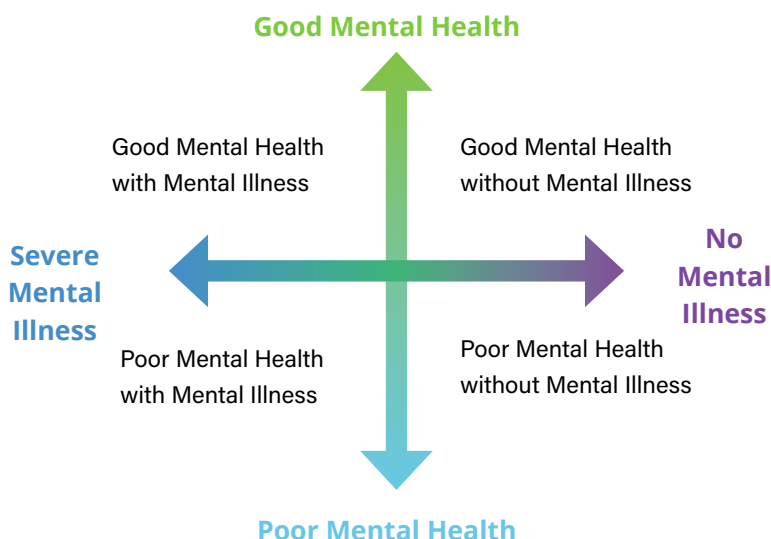


SOURCES

A Guidance Document for the Promotion of Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing



Optimal Mental Health



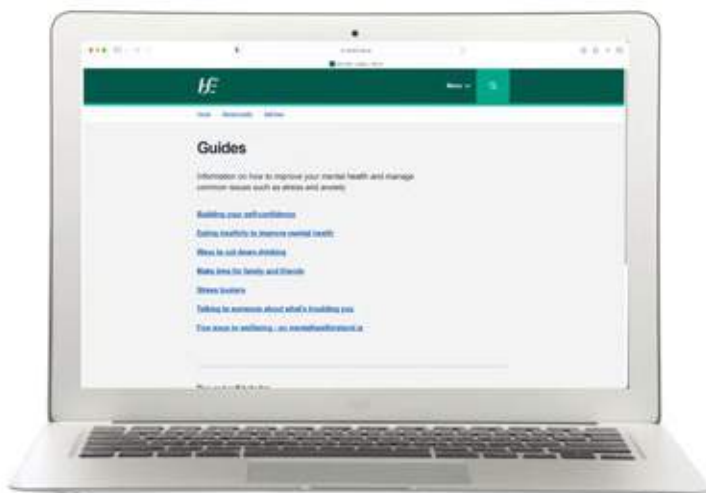
HSE Supports

The HSE provides information on how to improve your mental health and manage common issues such as stress and anxiety.



MORE INFO

For more
information scan
the QR code



The website has a range of information on:

- ◆ Building your self-confidence.
- ◆ Eating healthily to improve mental health.
- ◆ Ways to cut down on drinking.
- ◆ Make time for family and friends.
- ◆ Stress busters.
- ◆ Talking to someone.



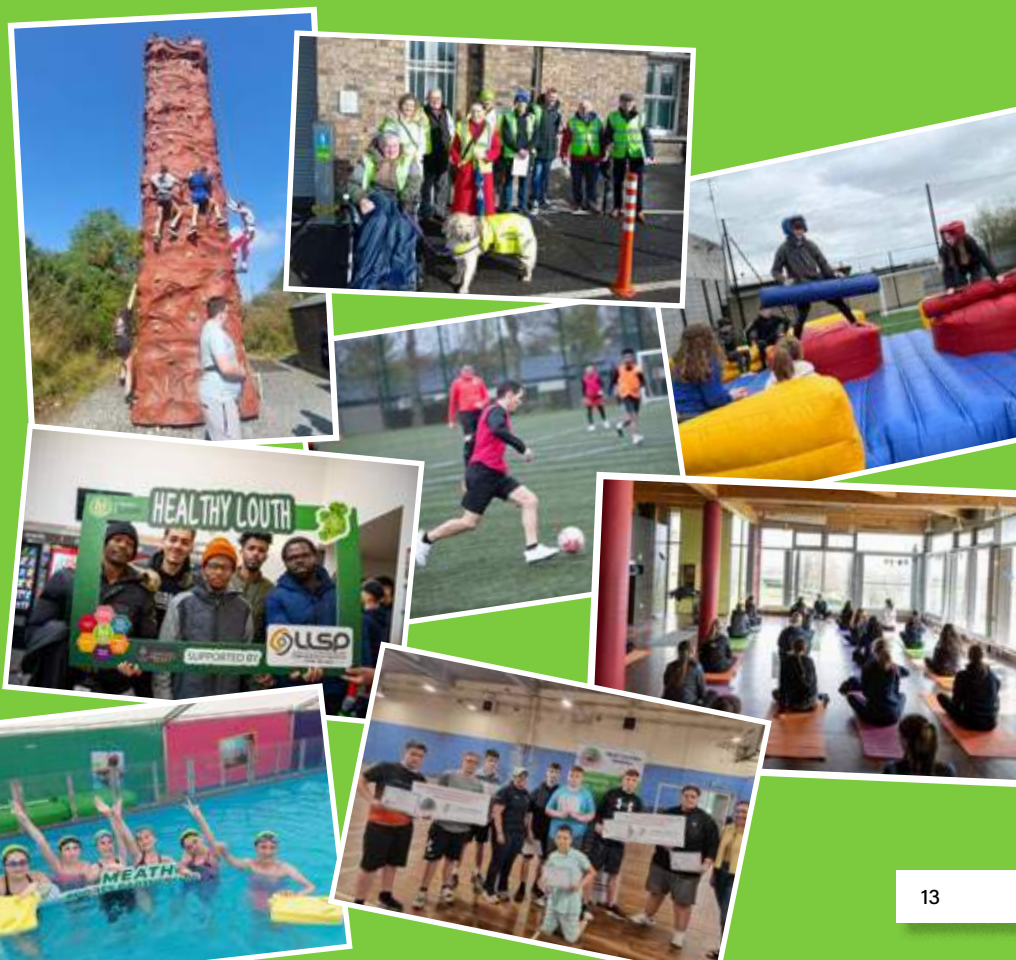
The HSE also states that making small changes such as taking part in physical activity can make a positive difference in your life.

- ◆ Find activities that can improve your mood and mental health.
- ◆ Activities with other people to improve mental health.
- ◆ Physical activity and your mental health.
- ◆ Improve your mood by doing something creative.
- ◆ Mindfulness.
- ◆ Relaxation tips.



MORE INFO

For more information scan the QR code



What is positive mental health?

It is important to recognise that everyone has mental health, and it's normal to have off days and to not feel okay all the time.

Positive mental health is feeling in control of your life and personal decisions.



SOURCES

Stronger
Together.
The HSE
Mental Health
Promotion
Plan
2022-2027



It is a crucial component of health and wellbeing; not only does it benefit the individual mentally, but it can also fully reinforce their quality of life. It has also been demonstrated that positive mental health is associated with improved academic achievement and educational attainment in the long term (O'Connor S et al. 2016) and adequate performance at work (Bond FW, Flaxman PE 2006). Positive mental health is also associated with being able to interact socially and build relationships with others.

Everybody has mental health, and for this reason, it is important to promote positive mental health amongst all individuals in our counties.

By doing this, we can benefit from a range of factors, including:

- ◆ Better self-esteem
- ◆ Improved life satisfaction
- ◆ Optimism
- ◆ Ability to deal with thoughts and feelings
- ◆ Emotional resilience
- ◆ More fulfilling relationships
- ◆ Increased longevity
- ◆ Feeling more confident
- ◆ Healthier behaviour and lifestyle choices
- ◆ Better physical health, including a reduced risk of heart disease





Minding your wellbeing

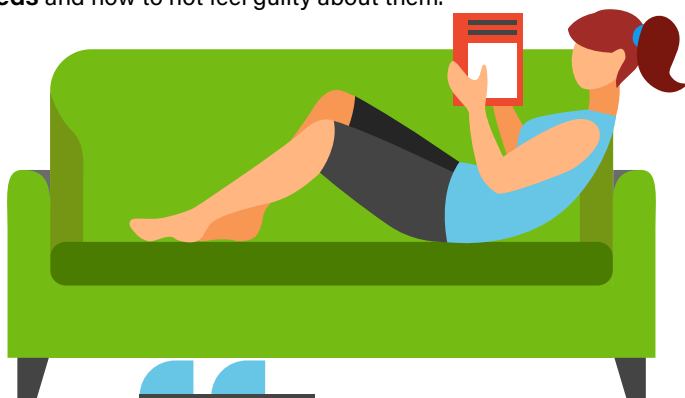
We can all benefit from taking time to prioritise our own positive mental health and wellbeing. **Remember, it is about progress, not perfection.** Start small and build from there! A good source of information on supporting our positive mental health is the HSE's Minding Your Wellbeing programme.

The programme provides practical advice and tips for everyone to look after their mental health and wellbeing.



Practicing self-care

- ◆ This explores the importance of an individual's self-care and encourages us to **build our own self-care toolkit**.
- ◆ It puts emphasis on the **importance of taking care of yourself before anyone else** and provides ways in which you can do that.
- ◆ Practicing self-care helps you know how to **prioritise your needs** and how to not feel guilty about them.



2 Understanding our Thoughts

- ◆ It helps us reflect on our thoughts and thinking and consider how thinking **patterns can impact our wellbeing**.
- ◆ It explores what **thinking traps** are and how to avoid them.
- ◆ It emphasises the **importance of mindfulness** when it comes to our mental health and the **benefits of practicing mindfulness** regularly.



3 Exploring Emotions

- ◆ Encourages us to **notice our emotions** and learn how to **increase our positive** emotions to improve our wellbeing.
- ◆ It focuses on the need to **recognise that uncomfortable emotions like anxiety are normal** and provides information on **how to manage** them when we experience them.





Building positive Relationships

- ◆ Discusses the ways in which we can **nurture, value, and foster** positive relationships.
- ◆ Delves into the most important contributors to **building positive relationships**.



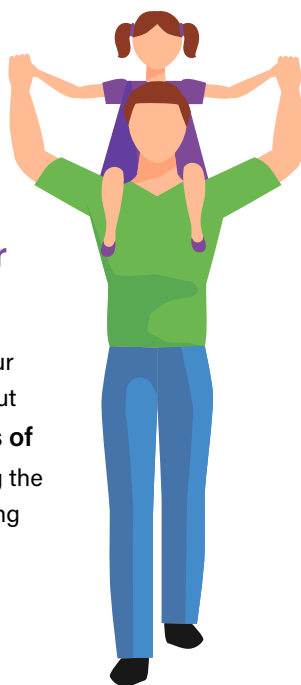
SOURCES

HSE Minding
Your Wellbeing
Programme

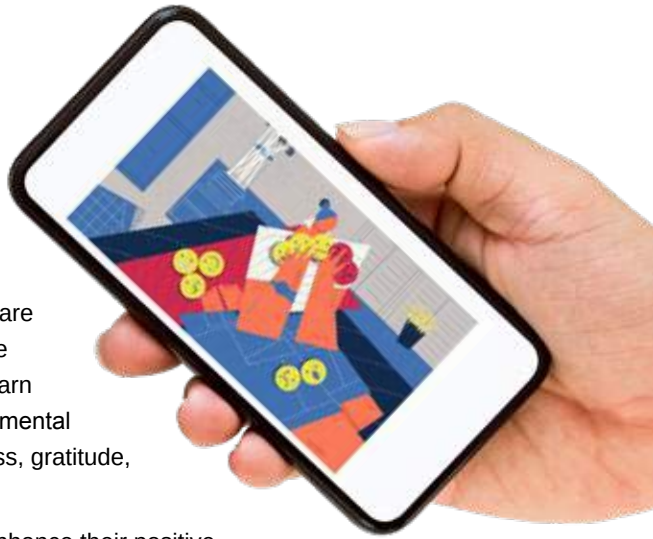


Improving our Resilience

- ◆ It helps to improve our resilience. Learn about the **building blocks of resilience**, including the importance of focusing on our strengths.



The Minding Your Wellbeing programme has free videos that are available on YouTube for anyone to access, whether you are at home, on your break at work or school, or listening to them in your car while you are driving. They provide a unique opportunity for everyone to learn and practice key elements of mental wellbeing, such as mindfulness, gratitude, self-care, and resilience.



For anyone who is trying to enhance their positive mental health and wellbeing, these are a great place to start and provide simple suggestions on things you can do yourself to improve your positive mental health and wellbeing. This shows that **professionals aren't always needed to help**; sometimes all you need is yourself and your own willingness to promote your own positive mental health and wellbeing can be enough **but of course it can be easier with support**.

It is also very important to know that it is okay and normal to feel less positive or have an off day. When dealing with difficult emotions, sometimes our natural reaction is to try to shut them down or block



them out. Many people do this because the fear of feeling those emotions is so strong. They may be afraid that they will 'feel too much' or that they won't be able to control the intensity of the emotion. In reality, allowing yourself to feel those emotions is one of the strongest things we can do and, the first step towards healing from them.

Here are some things you can try to help you overcome difficult emotions and move forward feeling better.

Allow yourself to

feel your emotions;
don't avoid them.

Working through your
feelings is a much more
helpful response in the
long run.

Be mindful and

try to focus on
the present.

Talk to someone

about how you are
feeling; if you are not
comfortable doing this
in person, try writing a
letter, picking up the
phone, or sending
a message.

Accept your

emotions without
questioning why
or trying to shut them
down. This takes practice,
so be persistent!

Remember,

it is about

progress, not

perfection, so

start slowly and take
time to practice if you
aren't used to it.



Spunout Factsheet
Dealing with
difficult emotions

Self-compassion

Self-compassion is a big part of minding our wellbeing, and it is important to remember that we need to treat ourselves with compassion like we would others. Think about how you would treat your loved ones around you, and with that same kindness, love, and compassion, treat yourself the same way.

What is self-compassion?

Self-compassion is simply the process of turning compassion inward.

We are kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate. We give ourselves support and encouragement rather than being cold and judgmental when challenges and difficulties arise in our lives (Kristin Neff). Always remember that sometimes we need to stand tall and say no, draw boundaries to situations, and say yes to ourselves to do what's needed to be happy rather than subordinating our needs to those of others.

Sometimes it's hard to practice self-compassion, as sometimes we can be our own worst critics.



Below is an example of eight exercises to help you practice self-compassion:



How would you treat a friend?

1

This exercise involves answering **four questions** to help you realise that the way you would treat your friend in that scenario is how you should treat yourself.

2

Self-Compassion Break

This exercise is about reflecting on a situation that has been difficult for you, realising how it makes you feel, and asking yourself questions about it.

3

Exploring self-compassion through writing

This exercise is about writing a letter to yourself from the perspective of an unconditionally loving imaginary friend.

4

Supportive Touch

In this exercise, you will learn how to activate your parasympathetic nervous system by using supportive touch to help you feel calm and cared for.



5

Changing your critical self-talk

This exercise will help you learn how to turn your self-critical voice into a more friendly one.



6

Self-Compassion journal

This exercise will help make self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness part of your daily life.

7

Identifying what we really want

In this exercise, you'll reframe your inner dialogue so that it is more encouraging and supportive.



8

Taking care of the carer

This exercise will allow you to keep your heart open and help you care for and nurture yourself.



SOURCES

Self-Compassion
Dr Kristin Neff



The role of communities in promoting positive mental health

The community is a powerful resource to strengthen and promote community mental health, wellbeing, and resilience, making it an essential component of any local positive mental health initiative. Communities comprise a range of organisations, groups, and services that can provide positive mental health promotion across a wide variety of population groups and settings outside the health sector (Sheridan & McElhinney 2016).

Getting involved in community-based promotion for positive mental health and wellbeing provides us with:

A sense of belonging

Feeling like you don't fit in can be isolating. Building a community could look like **finding other people who you identify with** so that you see a reflection of yourself in others. Building this community can **surround you with people who embrace and appreciate you** as you are.

Eliminates feelings of isolation, which can often lead to depression, loneliness, and anxiety.

Playing an **active role** in your community will **reduce isolation** and provide an outlet; it can **increase your skillset** and **build your confidence**. It also creates a network of people to support you.



Community is not just a group of people; it is a feeling. It is a feeling of being connected to others, accepted for who you are, and supported by others. At its heart, community is all about connection.

As social creatures, community is essential for human beings to thrive. In times of distress, being able to lean on a community can be an essential aspect of self-care.

Community is important for so many reasons: it provides us with a sense of belonging, acts as a powerful source of support, and offers a sense of purpose.

‘Remember that just as you need community, there is a community that needs you.’

Samaritan's, 2022

Acts as a powerful source of support

When you are struggling, raising your hand and asking for help can be incredibly daunting. Having a community around you that you can trust can be **critical to getting through that time**. People who you can talk to or who can help you through a difficult time can **help you feel cared for and safe**. You won't be a burden to your community if you ask for help; **they are there to help carry you** when you need them.



SOURCES

The Role of
Community
in Our
Mental
Health



Offers a feeling of purpose

We all bring something different to the table. Within a community, it is not uncommon for everyone to have a different role to play.



How can you find a community?

To connect with others, start by reflecting on what is important to you. What are your interests? You might find it easier to connect with people who enjoy the same activities that you do. What are your values and beliefs? Connecting with others who care about the same causes can play a big role in helping you build your community.

Ways to promote and look after our positive mental health within our community

There are many ways we can promote positive mental health, both for ourselves and others within our community. Mental Health Ireland emphasises five key strategies for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This was developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) through a set of evidence-based actions in 2008. The project examined research from across the world on proven actions that can help us feel good and function well (Aked J. et al. 2008).



SOURCES

5 Ways to Wellbeing



This is known as the 5 Ways to Wellbeing





Firstly, staying connected with others is vital. Maintaining supportive relationships can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of loneliness. *Some examples of staying connected include:*

- ◆ Join local clubs.
- ◆ Arrange a day out with a friend or family.
- ◆ Volunteer in your local community.
- ◆ Play a game with your family in the evening, e.g., cards.

Secondly, being physically active

enhances mood, reduces stress levels, and boosts your energy levels. It is also a way to meet people and get involved in your community. *Some examples of ways to be physically active include:*

- ◆ Go out for a run, walk, jog, or cycle.
- ◆ Meet with a friend (connect) and go for a walk (be active).
- ◆ At work, go for a short walk on your break.
- ◆ Join a workout class at your local gym.



Thirdly, taking notice of the present moment and





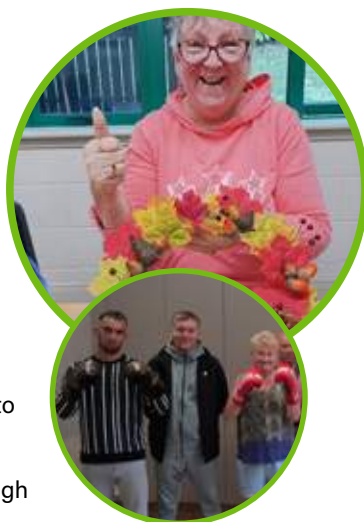
what is around you helps you appreciate things and can reduce anxiety. *Some examples of taking notice include:*

- ◆ Spend a few minutes a day in silence to reflect on your thoughts and notice how you are feeling.
- ◆ Go for a slow walk and look around you and notice what is happening—the plants that are there, animals, insects, buildings, etc.

Fourthly, learning new things helps us feel a sense

of accomplishment and fulfilment. It also helps with personal growth. *Some examples of ways to learn new things include:*

- ◆ Look up a new recipe and make it to learn something new in a fun way.
- ◆ Learn a new skill, whether that is at work, school, college, through sport, etc.
- ◆ Learn a new language.
- ◆ Research something you've always wanted to know about.



Lastly, give back to others through

acts of kindness; this helps to create a sense of purpose and belonging.

Some examples of giving back to others include:

- ◆ Volunteer in your local community.
- ◆ Help a friend or family member with something they're struggling with.
- ◆ Make a cup of tea or some food for a friend or family.





SECTION 2

Co-Designing CommUnity Connect with our Community

Co-Designing 'CommUnity Connect' with Our Community

At the heart of 'CommUnity Connect' is our commitment to inclusivity, to involve our community in every step of the project. By embracing a co-design approach, we aimed to make sure the voices, needs, and aspirations of our community members were not only heard but also actively included in the project's design and implementation.

Climbing the Ladder of Participation

Reflecting our values of inclusivity and empowerment, we've moved away from the traditional model of **'doing for'** the community, as seen at the bottom of the **Ladder of Participation**. Instead, we've embraced a more collaborative approach, aiming to reach the top of the ladder where we **'do with'**, by **'co-designing'** our community project.



Engagement and Collaboration

Our journey up the ladder of participation started with extensive community engagement efforts, including surveys, focus groups, and a co-design workshop. Through these interactions, we actively sought to understand the diverse perspectives, experiences, and needs of our community members regarding mental health and wellbeing support.



Design Process

With insights from these community engagement activities, we began the co-design process, inviting community members to work with us in shaping the vision, goals, and strategies of "CommUnity Connect." Through co-design

workshops and participatory decision-making processes, we collectively envisioned a project that resonates with the aspirations and values of our community.



Co-Delivery and Implementation

As we transition from the design phase to implementation, we will continue to prioritise collaboration and partnership. Community members will be actively involved in the co-delivery of “CommUnity Connect,” they will contribute to various aspects of the project, from further development of this resource to the growth of the network and the champion training.



We will adopt a test-and-learn approach to the CommUnity Connect champion programme, ensuring that it remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of our community. Champions will provide feedback on their training experiences, and this input will be crucial in evolving and refining the project. This continuous improvement process will ensure that “CommUnity Connect” remains relevant, effective, and aligned with the community’s needs.



Outcomes and Impact

By embracing a co-design approach and climbing the ladder of participation, we have fostered a sense of ownership, agency, and collective responsibility within our community. “CommUnity Connect” is not just a project developed for the community, but a project developed by the community, reflecting the diverse voices and strengths of those it seeks to serve. As we continue this journey, we are confident that our collaborative efforts will lead to meaningful outcomes and a lasting impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our community.



Learning from Other Community Champion Programme

Case Study 1

Ealing Council Community Champions

Ealing Community Champions are volunteers who live or work in Ealing and want to make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of people in their community.

Acting as a link between the council and their community, champions share reliable health and wellbeing information with friends, family, and their wider community of social networks.

Ealing Council recognises that those who have close and trusted relationships with residents, are best placed to share this information. Their community champions signpost people to relevant support and health services. They empower people to make their own informed decisions about health and wellbeing and help stop misinformation.

Conversations take place in spaces that are convenient, including cafes, libraries, places of worship, or people's homes. Information is shared through local activities such as a book club or events, such as school fairs, faith events, and carnivals.



SOURCES

Ealing Community
Champions



What being a champion means to them

Maria, 70 years old

Maria, a community champion from Kensington and Chelsea, is a resident in her 70s who lives alone, and is one of the project's newest champions. In response to the champions' promotional efforts, Maria dropped in on one of the community conversations. This, in turn, led her to try the weekly community choir over Zoom, which she still attends. She soon tried most of the other weekly online activities on offer, including the 'Time of Your Life' support group for over 55s, all of which she actively encouraged others to join.

She commented,

"Thanks to these sessions, I no longer feel lonely or isolated as a result of lockdown life."

Through talking to project manager Matt and some of the champions, Maria expressed an interest in becoming a community champion. She is now volunteering with the project with the intention of supporting older people in the future.

Maria said,

"I was amazed when I first came across the online sessions and how well supported the local community was through the Champions programme. After taking part in many of the online activities, I jumped at the chance to volunteer and become a champion myself. I've already started helping over 55s with physical activities, and with lockdown easing, I'm looking forward to doing so much more while I'm being trained up as a champion."

Case Study 2

Bolton Council Community Champions

Launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was originally designed so communities could get important information from trusted local voices.

Since then, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the champions, the programme has gone from strength to strength and is ready to continue into a new chapter, supporting residents to live healthier and happier lives.

What is a community champion?

It is often easier for people to talk to a friend or somebody who lives close to them and this gives local people the

option to talk about their concerns and get help when needed.

Anyone can be a community champion! You don't need any fancy qualifications or even any experience at all. You just need to care about your local community and want to make a difference.

Bolton's Community Champions are individuals who pledge to share positive, correct health and wellbeing messages and information with family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues, and their community at their leisure. There is no minimum commitment, and it is completely voluntary.

Bolton Council's Executive Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Cllr. Susan Baines, said:

"The local volunteers in Bolton who signed up to become community champions worked hard during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep our residents safe. Over the last year, they have strived to make a positive difference in their respective areas. I would urge anyone who has a passion to help people in their community to consider becoming a community champion. You will need to have a positive outlook and a "can-do" attitude to signpost and inspire others in need."



SOURCES

Bolton
Community
Champions





SECTION 3

What Our Community Told Us

CommUnity Connect Public Consultation. Summary of Common Themes.

Mission Statement & Values:

Healthy Louth and Meath invited community groups to co-design the concept for CommUnity Connect. Here's what they had to say.



Resource Pack



1. Accessibility and Inclusivity

Provide materials in different languages and formats, including easy-read versions and braille



2. Multi-Modal Communication

Use videos, infographics, and text to convey information effectively



3. Engagement and Outreach

Utilise social media and provide resources on mental health support.



4. Resource Content

Include crisis contacts, group profiles, physical activity booklets, and directories of services



5. Technology Integration

Develop an app and use QR codes for easy access to resources



6. Community Support

Link with existing programmes and keep resources up-to-date



7. Conciseness and Usability

Make the resource pack user-friendly and concise

The Network



CommUnity Connect Champions

01

Champion Attributes and Roles:

Define clear roles, provide mentoring and support, and ensure diversity among champions.



02

Community Engagement:

Use social media for promotion and ensure cultural considerations in outreach.



03

Training and Support:

Offer comprehensive, ongoing training and support systems.



04

Safety and Confidentiality:

Emphasise privacy and safeguarding.



05

Sustainability:

Maintain ongoing support and continuity for champions.



06

Feedback and Evaluation:

Collect feedback and continuously evaluate the programme's effectiveness.



Action Areas

Following the co-design consultation, these were the key action areas for CommUnity Connect.



“Some groups might like their champion to be from their own social circle”

“Proper Training needed, Online and in person”

“All groups should have a mental health focus and should work actively to promote good mental health”

“The champions need to be nurtured and supported”

“Define the role of the ‘Champion’ with a clear description so expectations are clear, and boundaries can be set”

“Sometimes people aren’t aware of what is available in their area, champions should be sign posters”

“Universal Design:
Inclusivity is very important”

“Opening up to all in community not just certain groups.”

“Open forum, safe space”

“Boundaries & supervision for champions. Good training behind champions”





SECTION 4

What is CommUnity Connect

What is CommUnity Connect?



At **CommUnity Connect**, we aim to foster community wellbeing through **prevention** and **early intervention**, promoting **shared ownership of mental health** and wellbeing. Our mission is **rooted in inclusivity, accessibility**, and **adaptability**, ensuring **everyone** in the community can **engage and benefit** from our initiatives.

We believe in the **power of community knowledge** and **experience**, and we are dedicated to **creating a supportive and empowering environment for all**.

Mission Statement

Values



'CommUnity Connect'

Resource Pack

At the heart of 'CommUnity Connect' lies a commitment to supporting our community groups in nurturing the mental well-being of their members. 'CommUnity Connect' offers a valuable resource that combines both national and local support networks, carefully mapped to align with the **"5 ways to Wellbeing"** framework. Through this strategic alignment, community groups can effectively signpost their members

to a variety of supports, activities, groups, and clubs tailored to enhance positive mental health within their community. By fostering connections and facilitating access to resources, 'CommUnity Connect' endeavors to promote holistic well-being and resilience at both individual and community levels.

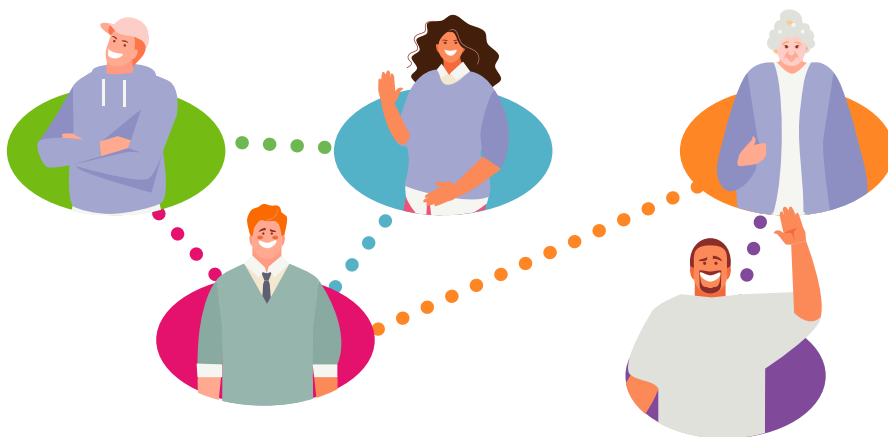
'CommUnity Connect' is committed to ensuring widespread accessibility and usability of its resource. To achieve this, the resource will be made available online, allowing all community members to easily access and utilise its wealth of information and support networks. Additionally, as part of our dedication to grassroots engagement, 'CommUnity Connect' Champions will receive a hard copy of the resource. This approach ensures that both online and offline

communities have the necessary tools to promote positive mental health and well-being effectively. And to keep things fresh and relevant, we'll be reviewing this resource on an annual basis, ensuring it remains up-to-date and reliable.



The Network

The Network is a group of organisations who are committed to promoting mental health and wellbeing and the values of 'CommUnity Connect'. Network members will receive the resource pack and promote it amongst their group and across the wider community. Signage will be provided to hang on their premises, post on their website and social media accounts.



As part of the Network:

- ◆ You will be provided with accurate information and resources so that you can help your local communities with issues related to mental health & wellbeing;
- ◆ You can tell us what further information, resources or other support you think would help your community;
- ◆ You can provide further feedback and information about the barriers and difficulties your community is facing regarding mental health and wellbeing;
- ◆ Your feedback will be collected and passed to the Healthy County Coordinator to help them more effectively respond to communities with the overall aim being to improve mental health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

The Role of the Champion

- ◆ The 'CommUnity Connect' Champion will be **someone who is a trusted, active member of their community**, a source of information, provide mental health and wellbeing signposting support and be passionate about advocating mental health and wellbeing in the community;
- ◆ Champions will receive ongoing, tailored training and support, ensuring they are well-equipped and supported in their roles. This training will support them to use their voice and networks to promote positive conversations about mental health and wellbeing in their community;
- ◆ Recruitment will focus on diversity and inclusion, ensuring champions understand and represent the needs of their communities;
- ◆ Champions will improve connections between services and communities, with clear signposting and referral pathways;
- ◆ Champions will be recruited on a pilot basis initially. A continuous engagement and feedback mechanism will be established to facilitate ongoing review and evaluation of the programme.



How to get involved

Becoming part of the 'CommUnity Connect' initiative is simple. If your community group or club are interested in joining the Network or would like to appoint an individual to become a 'CommUnity Connect Champion', here's how you can get involved:

Joining the Network:



Express Interest

Contact us to join the Network.



Get Resources

Receive the 'CommUnity Connect' pack.



Promote

Spread awareness in your community.



Provide Feedback

Share your thoughts and suggestions.



Becoming a Champion



Sign up now!

Contact your County Coordinator here

Louth healthylouth@louthcoco.ie
Meath healthymeath@meathcoco.ie

**'Join us in making
a difference for
mental health
and wellbeing**



**Healthy
Meath**



**Healthy
Louth**

SECTION 5

Make Your Community Flower

CommUnity Connect

Make your Community Group

'5 ways to wellbeing' flower

We asked community groups across Louth and Meath to consider how their group activities relate to the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and can contribute to positive mental health and the values of CommUnity Connect. Here's what you came up with.



COMMUNITY GROUP 1

Lifestyle Development Group, Drogheda



COMMUNITY GROUP 2

Future Stars Parent Group



COMMUNITY GROUP 3

Cooley Connect Well



COMMUNITY GROUP 4

REHAB CARE



COMMUNITY GROUP 5

Dundalk Youth Centre



Meath

COMMUNITY GROUP 1

Meath ICA



COMMUNITY GROUP 2

Meath Womens Refuge



COMMUNITY GROUP 3

Neurodiversity Navan



COMMUNITY GROUP 4

Singing for Wellbeing



Community Group 5

Clann na nGael GAA Club





SECTION 6

Putting the 'U' in CommUnity Connect

Activites

Welcome to the Activities Section. Here, you'll find a range of activities designed to enhance your mental health and well-being. Whether you prefer creative tasks, mindfulness exercises, or physical activities, there's something for everyone. Dive in, take time for yourself, and enjoy activities that support your mental health and happiness.

Gratitude Journal

Gratitude helps us embrace all aspects of our lives, not just the good moments. It involves recognizing and appreciating the continuous goodness we receive.

Choose your journal

Pick a journal that feels special and comfortable, whether it's a notebook, a fancy new journal, or a digital app.

Create a gratitude-friendly space:

Find a quiet, comfortable spot where you can write without interruptions, like a cozy corner at home or a park bench.

Set a regular journaling routine

Choose a consistent time each day to write, whether in the morning to start positively or at night to reflect on your day.



Daily Intentions

THINGS I'M GRATEFUL FOR



SELF CARE TODAY



My GOALS AND INTENTIONS



HOW WAS My MOOD

THINGS I ACOMPLISHED TODAY



Circle your mood

WATER



Colour the amount of glass of water you take

Self-care tips and ideas

Use this self-care bingo sheet for ways to improve your positive mental health.

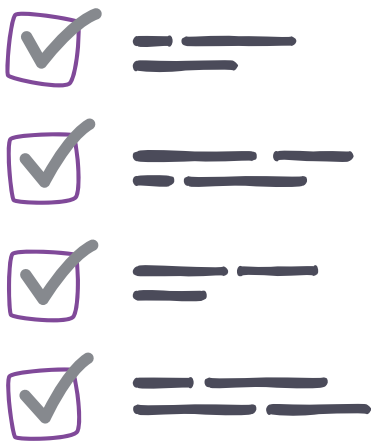
 TAKE A SHOWER	 CREATE A FEELGOOD PLAYLIST	 CALL A FRIEND AND GO FOR COFFEE	 UNFOLLOW NEGATIVE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS	 MEDITATE
 LISTEN TO MUSIC OR DANCE AROUND	 TRY A NEW RESTAURANT	 START A NEW BOOK	 WRITE A LIST OF 8 THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT YOURSELF	 DO SOME GARDENING
 BUY YOURSELF SOME FLOWERS	 DRINK WATER	ME TIME	 ORGANISE YOUR ROOM	 BE KIND TO SOMEONE
 CANCEL PLANS OR MAKE PLANS	 SPEND SOME TIME IN NATURE	 WATCH YOUR FAVOURITE FILM	 TAKE A NAP	 HAVE A BATH
 ACCOMPLISH A GOAL	 TRY SOMETHING NEW	 WRITE IN A JOURNAL	 GO OUT WITH FRIENDS	 TURN OFF YOUR PHONE FOR A DAY



Goal Setting Activity

This activity will help you identify your goals and create a plan to achieve them. Setting clear and specific goals can motivate you and provide direction. Remember to be gentle with yourself, make allowances when things aren't done, or when things get in the way.

Getting
Things
Done!



Yearly Planner



Year

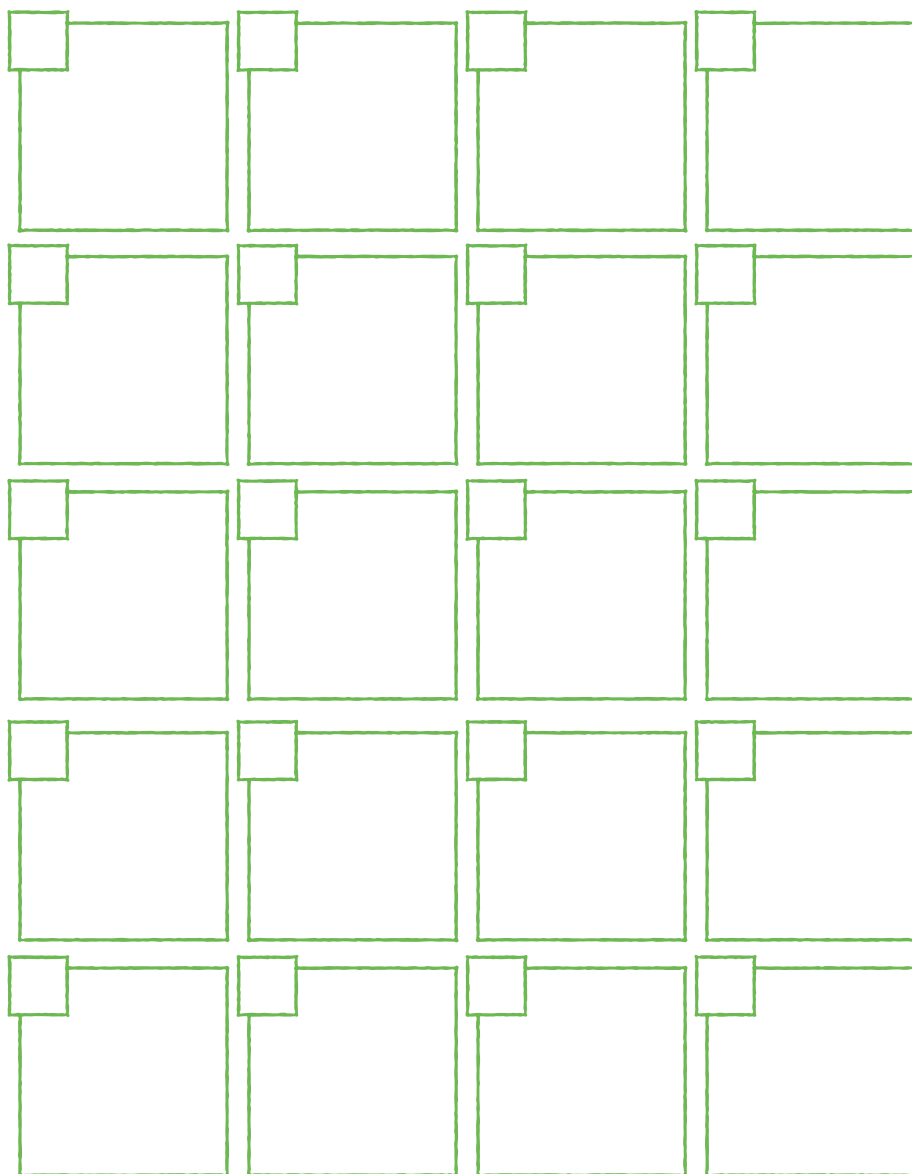
— JAN —	— FEB —	— MAR —
— APR —	— MAY —	— JUN —
— JUL —	— AUG —	— SEPT —
— OCT —	— NOV —	— DEC —

Monthly Planner

Month

BIRTHDAYS





Weekly Planner

Week Starting

APPOINTMENTS



GOALS



MON	
TUES	
WED	
THURS	
FRI	
SAT	
SUN	

TO DO

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

GRATEFUL FOR



Goal Planner

GOAL



DEADLINE



ACTION STEPS



NOTES



GOAL



DEADLINE



ACTION STEPS



NOTES



Daily Planner

SCHEDULE

[illegible]

HAPPY MEMORY



Date _____

APPOINTMENTS



MEALS



SHOPPING LIST



Breathing Exercises

Breath focus helps you concentrate on slow, deep breathing and aids you in disengaging from distracting thoughts and sensations. Try this activity to get started!

4

Close Your Mouth, inhale quietly through your nose for count of four

7

Hold your breath for a count of Seven

8

Exhale completely through your mouth for count of eight



Guided Meditation

Meditation brings your attention to the present moment and develops mindfulness, the ability to be focused on the here and now. Try this activity to get started!



WALKING MEDITATION EXERCISES

For Audio Guidance
Scan Here



**As you begin,
walk at a natural pace.**

Place your hands wherever comfortable: on your belly, behind your back, or at your sides. If you find it useful, you can **count steps up to ten, and then start back at one again.** If you're in a small space, as you reach ten, pause, and with intention choose a moment to turn around.

With each step, **pay attention to the lifting and falling of your foot.** Notice movement in your legs and the rest of your body. **Notice** any shifting of your body from side to side.

Whatever else captures your attention, **come back to the sensation of walking.** Your mind will wander, so without frustration, **guide it back** again as many times as you need. Particularly outdoors, maintain a larger sense of the environment around you, taking it all in, staying safe and aware.



Now for a few minutes, **expand your attention to sounds.** Whether you're indoors, in the woods, or in a city, **pay attention to sounds** without labeling or naming, or getting caught up in whether you find them pleasant or unpleasant. **Notice sounds as nothing more or less than sound.**



Shift your awareness to your sense of smell. Again, simply notice. Don't push or force yourself to feel anything at all, just bring attention to the sense of smell, whatever you discover.





Now, **move to vision: colors and objects and whatever else you see.** Patiently coming back each time something grabs

your attention, or even if something needs addressing, like avoiding an obstacle. Staying natural, not overly rigid, not daydreaming and drifting, but with sustained awareness.

Keep this open awareness of everything around you, wherever you are. **Nothing to do, nothing to fix, nothing to change. Fully aware, and walking.**



In the last moments, **come back to awareness of the physical sensations of walking,** wherever else your mind found

itself throughout the practice.

Notice your feet again touching the ground. Notice again the movements in your body with each step.

When you're ready to end your walking meditation, **stand still for a moment again.** Pausing, choose a moment to end the practice.

As you finish, consider how you might bring this kind of awareness into the rest of your day.



Grounding Technique

Grounding is a technique that helps keep you in the present and helps reorient you to the here-and-now and to reality. Try this activity to get started

5

THINGS YOU CAN SEE

4

THINGS YOU CAN FEEL

3

THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

2

THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

1

THING YOU CAN TASTE

Five P's of Energy Conservation

Many of us experience the symptoms of tiredness and fatigue in our everyday lives. Following the Five P's of Energy Conservation may help with this.

Planning ahead

Plan how you are going to use your energy. Plan which tasks are done when and spread them throughout the day or week prioritising that all tasks do not need to be done straight away or all in the same day.

Pacing

Break tasks down into **smaller more manageable** ones with rest in between. Do the bigger/ more difficult ones at your best time of the day (when you have the most energy).

Prioritise

Ensure you do all tasks that are **most important** and **eliminate unnecessary tasks** that don't have to be done straight away.

Positioning

Remember about **maintaining a good posture** while completing tasks as it will save your energy.

Positive Attitude

Be kind to yourself! Some days will be easier than other but **don't beat yourself up** if you do not complete all of your planned tasks.





SECTION 7

5 Ways to Wellbeing Mapping Activities

CommUnity Connect '5 Ways to Wellbeing' Mapping

What is already available in your community?

Sometimes people think they have to go elsewhere to find ways to do something active or to socialise, when most times the community you live in is rich with all manner of opportunities. Lots of resources are available in your community, much of it is free.

There may be activities or services provided by organisations, public facilities or natural environments that are often taken for granted.



CONNECT

Community and festivals; a craft class; drop-in; parent & toddlers



GET ACTIVE

Local parks; a walking group; a playpark; sports clubs; yoga classes; Parkrun



TAKE NOTICE

Local places of interest; wildlife; art; mindfulness classes



KEEP LEARNING

Libraries; Sewing Club; Homework Club; Skills Programmes; Cookery Classes



GIVE

Opportunities to volunteer; supporting an event or project; spending time with a neighbour

Why not create your own '5 ways to wellbeing' Community Calendar

5 Ways to Wellbeing CALENDAR



CONNECT



GET
ACTIVE



TAKE
NOTICE



KEEP
LEARNING



GIVE

Complete this template to share the opportunities available in your community, colour coded to the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. This is available to download from the QR code above.

This is linked directly to the community mapping tool and project planning tool, this tool will allow organisations within the local community to **plan and deliver 5 Ways to Wellbeing**

Wellbeing Map

Tell us about it – we would love to hear from you!

5 Steps to Wellbeing

COMMUNITY MAPPING TOOL

Logo Goes Here

	WHAT IS IT?	WHO IS IT FOR?	WHERE IS IT?	HOW DO I JOIN?
 CONNECT				
 GET ACTIVE				
 TAKE NOTICE				
 KEEP LEARNING				
 GIVE				

This tool is to help community groups to map existing or planned activities against the 5 Steps to Wellbeing while identifying beneficiaries and any areas for development

Are you planning a Positive Mental Health Initiative/Project within your Community?

5 Steps to Wellbeing COMMUNITY PROJECT PLANNING TOOL

Logo Goes Here

PROJECT NAME:

5 AREAS SUPPORTED:



CONNECT



GET
ACTIVE



TAKE
NOTICE



KEEP
LEARNING



GIVE

5 OUTCOMES

What the project will achieve
eg Connect, Keep Learning

OUTPUTS

The activities that will happen

INPUTS

What resources you need to make
it happen

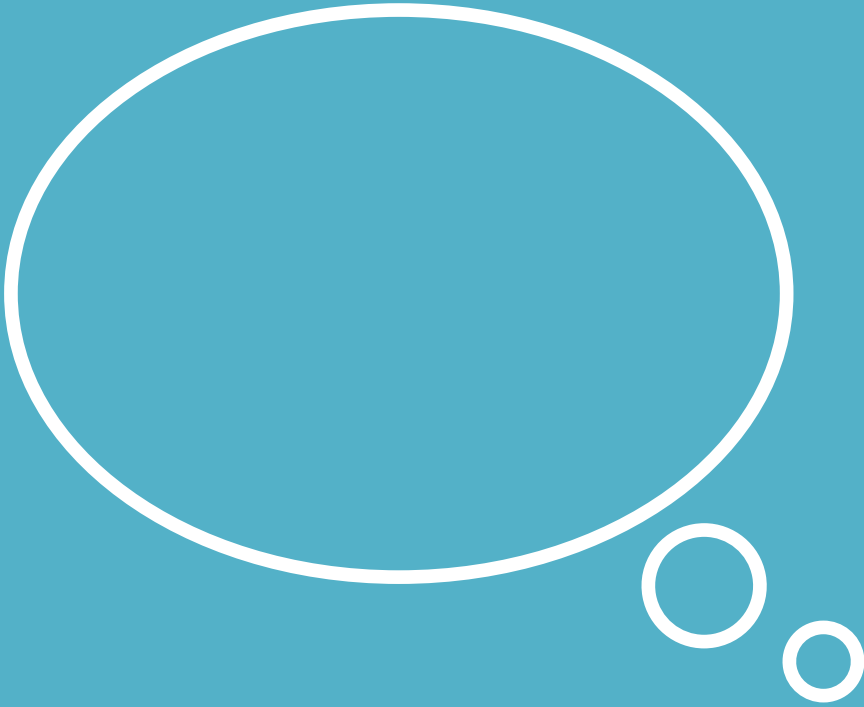
MILESTONES

When things happen and who will
do it

EVALUATIONS

How you will know how well you
are doing

This tool is to help community groups to map existing or planned activities against the 5 Steps to Wellbeing while identifying beneficiaries and any areas for development



SECTION 8

CommUnity Connect Directory

Crisis Support

If you need urgent help now...

If you feel you need to get support immediately

Phone the emergency services on

999 or 112.

Contact your local GP
or attend the nearest
hospital Emergency
Department.

Scan this code for
out of hours GP.



24\7



Helplines

You can receive support, and talk to someone by contacting one of the helplines below:

North East Doc-on-Call Service

T 1800777911

W www.nedoc.ie

Urgent Family Doctor Out-of-Hours Service.

Opening Hours:

Monday - Friday:

18:00 – 08:00

Weekends/Public Holidays:

08:00 – 20:00



HSE Drugs & Alcohol Helpline

T 1800 459 459

W www.drugs.ie

W www.drinkaware.ie

The HSE Drugs & Alcohol Helpline provides support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to drug and alcohol use and/or HIV and sexual health.



T 116 123 (**FREE** to call)
(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

W www.samaritans.org

E jo@samaritans.org

If you need a response immediately, it's best to call us on the phone. This number is **FREE** to call. Talk to us any time you like, in your own way, and off the record – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal.



TX Text the word **HELLO** to **50808**
(24 hours, 7 days a week)

W www.textaboutit.ie/

Free-text for an anonymous chat with a trained volunteer, any time.

Text About It is a free, 24/7 service, providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support for your mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Childline

T 1800 66 66 66 (**FREE** to call)
(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

TX Text the word **TALK** to **50101**

W www.childline.ie

Here in Childline we try to empower, support, and protect young people like you. Our services are all free and confidential. We don't trace calls or texts and your IP address is not visible. Children and teenagers talk to us about a lot of different things. You don't have to have a problem to contact us. We don't give out to you or tell you what to do. We help you figure out your own solutions and we're here to listen. There are several ways to get in touch with us. There is a telephone service, there is an online service and there is a mobile phone texting service.



1800 833 634
TeenLine
IRELAND

T 1800 833 634 (**FREE** to call)

TX Text the word **TEEN** to **50015**

Free Text Service

(both lines 8pm to 11pm, 365 days a year).

W www.teenline.ie

Sometimes we can let things pile on top of us. Talking may seem scary. But it helps when there's someone there to really listen.

Teen-Line Ireland is a National Free-Phone and SMS Text Service – that means:

- ◆ You don't need credit to call or text us from your mobile
- ◆ You don't need any change to call us from a phone box
- ◆ You won't be charged for calling us from a house phone.
- ◆ We just listen – that means:
- ◆ We don't tell you what to do
- ◆ We don't make any judgements about you or anyone you may talk about.



T 1800 247 247 (**FREE** to call)
(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

TX Text the word **HELP** to **51444**
(standard text message rates apply)

W www.pieta.ie

The services previously provided by Console have transferred to Pieta House. The contact details for Counselling Centre remains the same.

The suicide prevention helpline provides free professional counselling, support, advice and information for anyone in suicidal crisis or who has been bereaved by suicide. Perhaps you are worried about someone who is struggling or you have some other concerns about suicide? If so, please talk with one of our fully qualified and accredited counsellors or therapists today.



T 1800 901 909
(24 hours, 7 days a week)

TX direct.lc.chat/12408609/
Available daily from 8pm – 12am

Since 2007, SOSAD has worked to raise awareness and help prevent suicide in Ireland. We have worked tirelessly in our communities to help those in need feel supported and know they are not alone on their journey. SOSAD offer support and services for people who are struggling with suicidal ideation, self-harming, depression, bereavement, stress and anxiety, or if you simply need to talk. If you want to talk, we are here to listen. You can message us, call us, or call into our office.

We have six offices based in Cavan, Louth, Laois, Meath and Monaghan from which we provide our services.

[Click here](#) for more information on our services and how to access them.





T 1890 303 202
(Available Monday – Sunday,
10am to 10pm)

E supportmail@aware.ie

The Aware Support Line is for individuals who are seeking support and information to cope with, manage or recover from depression, anxiety and related conditions. Sometimes it can feel too difficult to pick up the phone and talk with someone about what is troubling us, so writing (using the above email address) might be an easier option for some people.

.....



T 1800 21 21 22 (**FREE** to call)
(Monday – Friday, 10.30am-12 noon)

W www.rcne.ie

We are here to listen and support women and men, and young people who have been raped, sexually assaulted, sexually abused as children or have experienced other forms of sexual violence.



Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (national helpline)

T 1800 77 88 88 (**FREE** to call)
(24 hours, 365 days a year)

W www.drcc.ie

We offer a free confidential, listening and support service for women and men who have been raped, sexually assaulted, sexually harassed or sexually abused at any time in their lives. We take calls on our freephone number from anywhere in the country.



Women's Aid (national helpline)

T 1800 341 900 (**FREE** to call)
(10am – 10pm every day of the year,
except Christmas day)

E helpline@womensaid.ie

W www.womensaid.ie

Women's Aid knows how difficult it can be living with domestic violence.

That is why we offer free confidential support and information. We listen to you and talk to you about your situation. We won't judge you or tell you what to do. We won't tell anyone you've been in touch with us. We can discuss your options and help you plan your safety. We can support you by sitting down with you to explore the various options available to you. We can also go to court with you.

Women's Aid Dundalk

T 042 933 3244 (**FREE** to call)
(24 hours)

TX 086 189 2439 (text support)
(Monday - Friday, 9am - 4pm)

E info@womensaidilk.net

W www.womensaidundalk.net

Women's Aid Dundalk is an organisation which believes in the basic rights of women who are, or who have lived with domestic violence. Refuge and support is available to all women and their children on an open door basis. It is a caring organisation, which provides a nurturing atmosphere for all involved. It enables personal growth and development through a philosophy of mutual aid and self-help.



T 01 554 3811

National Confidential Helpline

E hello@mensaid.ie
(Monday - Friday: 9am - 5pm)

Men's Aid Ireland Office Address:

St. Anne's Resource Centre
Railway Street, Navan,
C15 W0YX, Co. Meath

Men's Aid Ireland provide a confidential service underpinned by a victim centric and human rights proofed approach aimed at ensuring all male victims of Domestic Violence / Coercive Control receive the required support to be safe. Men's Aid support those victims who, from a gender perspective, primarily identify as male, including non-binary, intersex and transgender men within its support and services provision.



- T** 041 9844550
1800 929999 (**FREE** to call)
- E** supportservices@droghedarefuge.org
or
outreachsupport@droghedarefuge.org
- W** www.droghedarefuge.org

Drogheda Women & Children's Refuge (DWCR) is committed to providing support and assistance to women and children experiencing domestic violence and homelessness for more than 25 years. We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from fear, abuse and uncertainty.

area. Our services include a 24-hour / 365 day a year helpline and refuge accommodation, outreach, counselling, court accompaniment, children's programme and advocacy.



- T** 087 0933759 (Helpline)
- E** mcdartrim@gmail.com

MCDAR is a confidential community service providing a range of services to individuals and family members who may be experiencing difficulties with addiction.



- T** 1800 46 46 46
(24 hour confidential)
- E** support@dvservicesmeath.ie
- W** www.dvservicesmeath.ie/
- Webchat available **11am-1pm**
Monday-Friday on our website

We are a comprehensive service for women and children affected by domestic violence in the Meath



LGBT National Helpline

- T** 1800 929 539 (**FREE** to call)
(Monday - Friday, 6.30pm - 10.00pm)
 Fridays: 4:00pm - 10:00pm,
 Saturday - Sunday: 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Out of Hours:

- T** 116 123 (Samaritans **FREE** to call)
(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

- E** info@lgbt.ie



We're here to listen in confidence and without judgement, seven days a week. You can talk to us by phone or online through our instant messaging service or by coming along to one of our peer support groups. Whatever is on your mind we're here to listen.

.....



- T** 01 907 3707 (**FREE** to call)
(Sundays, 6pm to 9pm)
Tuesdays, 10am to 12pm)

Out of Hours:

- T** 116 123 (Samaritans **FREE** to call)
(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)



Have you heard of 'Making Every Contact Count'?

'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC) provides a framework to assist in supporting Patients / Service Users to make lifestyle choices that help prevent chronic diseases & promote self-management of existing chronic diseases.

The MECC initiative is doing important work in promoting health and wellbeing by providing resources and support for individuals to make positive lifestyle choices.

MECC Meath & Louth have compiled a useful signposting resource that has been categorised into the following themes:

- ◆ Tobacco/Smoking
- ◆ Alcohol and Drug
- ◆ Healthy Eating and Weight Management
- ◆ Active Living / Physical Activity
- ◆ Mental Health and Wellbeing
- ◆ Community Supports and Social Prescribing

Community groups can greatly benefit from the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) initiative in several ways. Firstly, MECC provides a structured framework and resources for both the community and voluntary sector to signpost their members or service users to both national and local community support services.

Additionally, MECC facilitates collaboration between community groups and healthcare professionals, fostering partnerships that enable the delivery of tailored health promotion interventions and the referral of individuals to appropriate support services. Ultimately, by integrating MECC principles into their activities, community groups can play a vital role in empowering individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices and contribute to the overall wellbeing of their communities.

To access the document please **scan the QR code**



MECC is a HSE priority programme under Health Promotion and Improvement managed by:

Duana McArdle, Lead for Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Programme
Midlands Louth Meath CHO 8, based within HSE Health
Promotion and Improvement, St. Brigid's Campus,
Kells Road, Ardee, Co. Louth,

E duana.mcardle@hse.ie

T 087 3761 552





w www.louthparenthub.ie

Have you heard of the Louth Parent Hub?

The 'Louth Parent Hub' is an online and interactive information hub for families living in County Louth. It provides information on the services and programmes available across Louth.

The aim of the hub is to provide families with the most up to date information available to them, and a way to find and contact the required services, via an online 'Directory of services.'

The Directory of Services has been categorised into the following themes:

- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Support Services
- ◆ Health & Disability
- ◆ Counselling & Therapy
- ◆ Youth & Community
- ◆ Sports & Recreation

Check out the 'Louth Parent Hub' Directory of Services via the link below:

w www.louthparenthub.ie/services

Along with providing information about services and programmes, the hub has also created a live 'calendar of events', on which you can register your interest and contact the provider directly.

Check out what's on via the link below:

w www.louthparenthub.ie/events

**FAMILY
SUPPORT
MEATH**



w www.familysupportmeath.ie

The Family Support Meath website is a Meath Children and Young Person's Service Committee initiative supported by a range of statutory, voluntary and community agencies in Meath. The website provides up to date and accessible information about services in Meath for children and young people and their families.

Information on services included on the website covered a wide range of topics such as:

- ◆ Addiction Services
- ◆ Antenatal, birth and breastfeeding support
- ◆ Child protection
- ◆ Counselling and Mental Health
- ◆ Disability Support
- ◆ Domestic Violence
- ◆ Educational Supports
- ◆ Family Support
- ◆ Health Centres and Hospital
- ◆ Income Support
- ◆ Migrants, New Communities and Ethnic Support
- ◆ Youth Justice and other Youth Services

SERVICES

www.familysupportmeath.ie/services/

WHAT'S ON

www.familysupportmeath.ie/category/news/



Healthy
Meath

WEBSITE



EMAIL healthymeath@meathcoco.ie

SOCIAL MEDIA

 @MeathCountyCouncil

 @meathcoco

 @meathcoco

NEWSLETTER



for Healthy
Meath
Newsletter



Healthy
Louth

WEBSITE



EMAIL healthylouth@louthcoco.ie

SOCIAL MEDIA

 @HealthyLouth

 @healthylouthcoco

 @HealthyLouth

NEWSLETTER



Scan Here
for Healthy
Louth
Newsletter

Healthy Ireland at Your Library

Public libraries are currently delivering the nationwide Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme that will establish libraries as a valuable source within the community for health information.



Healthy Ireland at Your Library offers the following resources and services to library users in every branch in the country.



Book Stock

A comprehensive collection of books on health and wellbeing will be available in all public libraries.



Online Resources

New e-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines will be accessible in every library and by remote access.



Health Information Services

Trained staff will be able to provide information guidance and direction to users with health and wellbeing queries and promote health awareness in the community.

Programmes and Events

Talks, discussions and workshops with a focus on physical health, mental health and health literacy.

Healthy Ireland at Your Library Webinars

For more information about the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme at your local library, please visit your library service website.

Louth Libraries



@ LouthLibraries



@LouthLibraries

Meath Libraries



@ MeathCountyLibrary



@MeathLibrary



Age Friendly Programme

Age Friendly Ireland is the organisation responsible for the national Age Friendly Programme, affiliated to the World Health Organization's [WHO] Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. The programme involves a multiagency, multi-sectoral approach to age-related planning and service provision. Age Friendly Ireland supports cities and counties to be more inclusive of older people by addressing their expressed concerns and interests under the eight pillars of the World Health Organization's global programme.

Age Friendly Ireland operates as a shared service centre of local government hosted by Meath County Council. The shared service centre supports a network of 31 local Age Friendly Programmes which are led by local authorities and which involve many stakeholders from other public bodies, universities, community/voluntary and private sector partners. The shared service supports a number of strategic national structures and provides technical guidance to its networks.

For more information

Age Friendly Louth



Age Friendly Meath



Volunteering

Achieving the Five Ways to Wellbeing through Volunteering



Embracing the **five ways to wellbeing** through volunteering not only allows us to give back and support our community but it also enables us to support ourselves and our mental health at the same time.

The Facts!

65% of volunteers found an **increase** in their **self-esteem**

55% of volunteers found an **improvement** in their **mental health & wellbeing**

59% of volunteers found an **increase** in their **range of friendships**

45% of volunteers found an **improvement** in their **physical health and wellbeing**

Scan to register as a
volunteer today!



#DoGoodFeelGood

Take Notice

Taking notice, or mindfulness, enhances mental well-being by focusing on the present, reducing depression, and fostering positivity. When volunteering, observe how helping others affects your emotions and the community, highlighting the benefits of mindfulness in daily actions.

Be Active

Being active can enhance happiness and reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Engaging in volunteer roles like litter picks and beach cleans not only promotes physical activity but also provides fresh air and a sense of community involvement.

Keep Learning

Engaging in learning new things through volunteering can enhance confidence, self-esteem, and purpose. It offers opportunities to discover more about the community, acquire new skills, and find additional ways to contribute.

Connect

Connecting with others is vital for mental health, quality of life, fulfillment, and longevity. In today's virtual world, human connection is crucial. Volunteering fosters community connections, enabling new friendships and support networks.

Give

Giving isn't just a one-way street—it's a pathway to happiness and contentment! When you volunteer, you're not just giving your time; you're giving to yourself and to your community.

For more information

Louth

www.volunteerlouth.ie

Meath

www.volunteermeath.ie

Online Classes



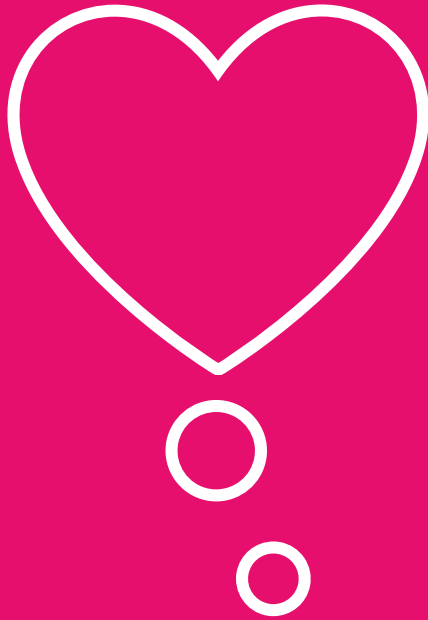
Scan Here
for Pilates for
Beginners Course



Scan Here
for Strength
& Conditioning
Course



Scan
Here for Yoga
for Beginners
Course



SECTION 9

Thanking Our Community



We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the CommUnity Connect mental health and wellbeing resource pack. Your support and input have been invaluable.

We would love to hear from you!

If you have any comments, questions, or feedback, please reach out to us:

Healthy Meath

e healthymeath@meathcoco.ie

t 046 9097400

w www.meath.ie/council/council-services/community/community-grants-and-initiatives/healthy-ireland-and-healthy-meath

Healthy Louth

e healthylouth@louthcoco.ie

t 042 932 4301

w www.louthcoco.ie/en/services/communities/programmes/healthy-louth/

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SECTION 10

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**It's ok to
Make Mistakes,**

**it's what we
do AFTER that
counts**

A stylized green leafy branch with several elongated, teardrop-shaped leaves and a small cluster of three-lobed leaves at the bottom left, positioned on the left side of the white circle.

**YOU ARE
JUST HUMAN.**

**BEING IMPERFECT DOES
NOT MAKE YOU ANY
LESS**

A stylized green leafy branch with several elongated, teardrop-shaped leaves and a small cluster of three-lobed leaves at the top right, positioned on the right side of the white circle.



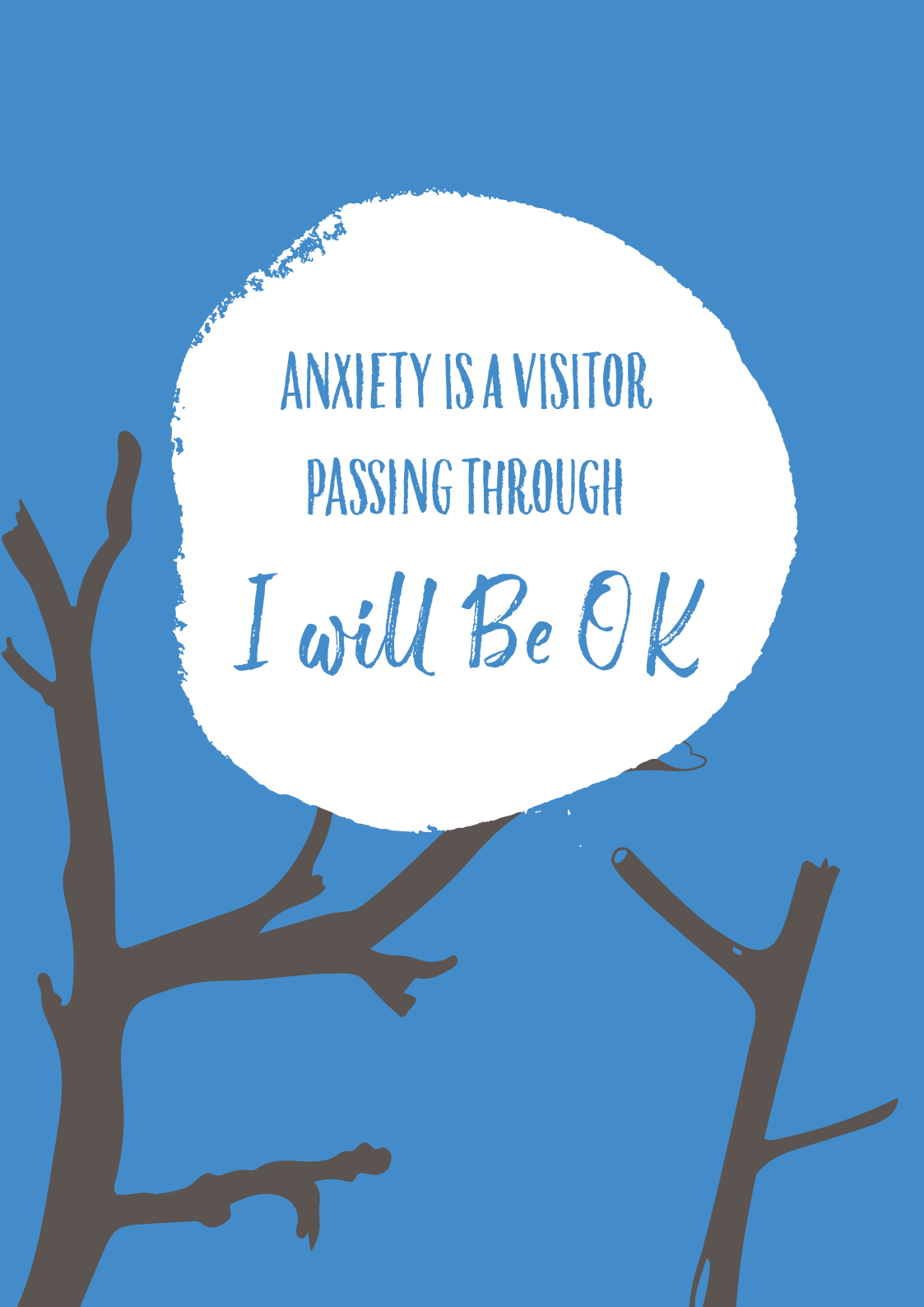
**NEVER A
FAILURE**

**ALWAYS
A LESSON**





My Feelings
*are allowed
to be here*



ANXIETY IS A VISITOR
PASSING THROUGH

I will Be OK

The image features a central, light-colored rock with a mottled, textured surface. The rock is set against a dark maroon background that is decorated with numerous thin, vertical, wavy lines in a lighter shade of maroon. The text is centered on the rock and reads:

COMPARISON
is the
THIEF
of Joy

I'M NOT
PERFECT BUT

I'm Worth It





FAILURE
*is not the opposite
of success*
IT'S PART OF SUCCESS



IT'S OK to be
BRAVE and
AFRAID at the
same time

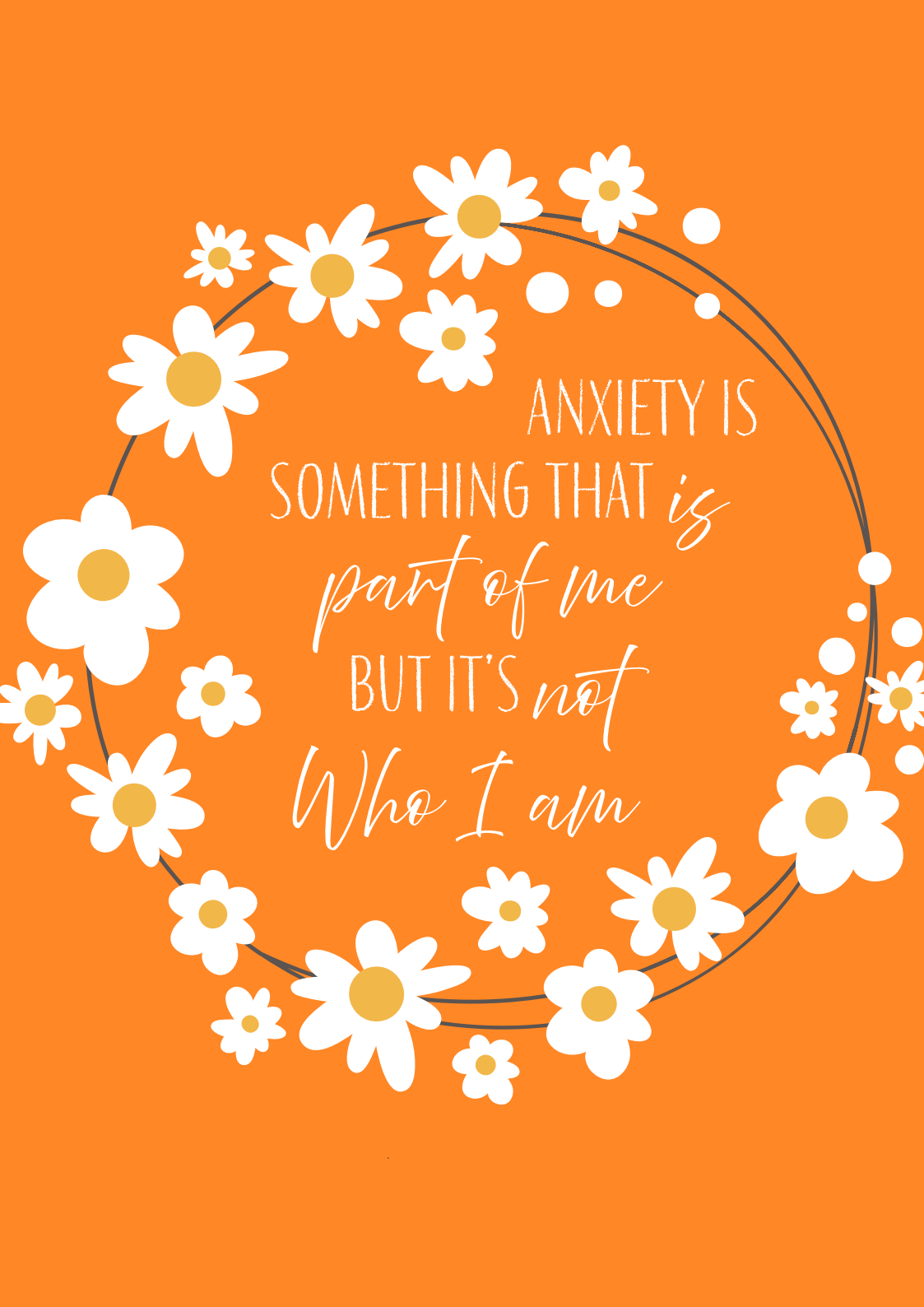
THE WORD
'Imperfect'
ACTUALLY SPELLS
I'm perfect
BECAUSE EVERYONE IS
PERFECT IN THEIR OWN
imperfect WAY



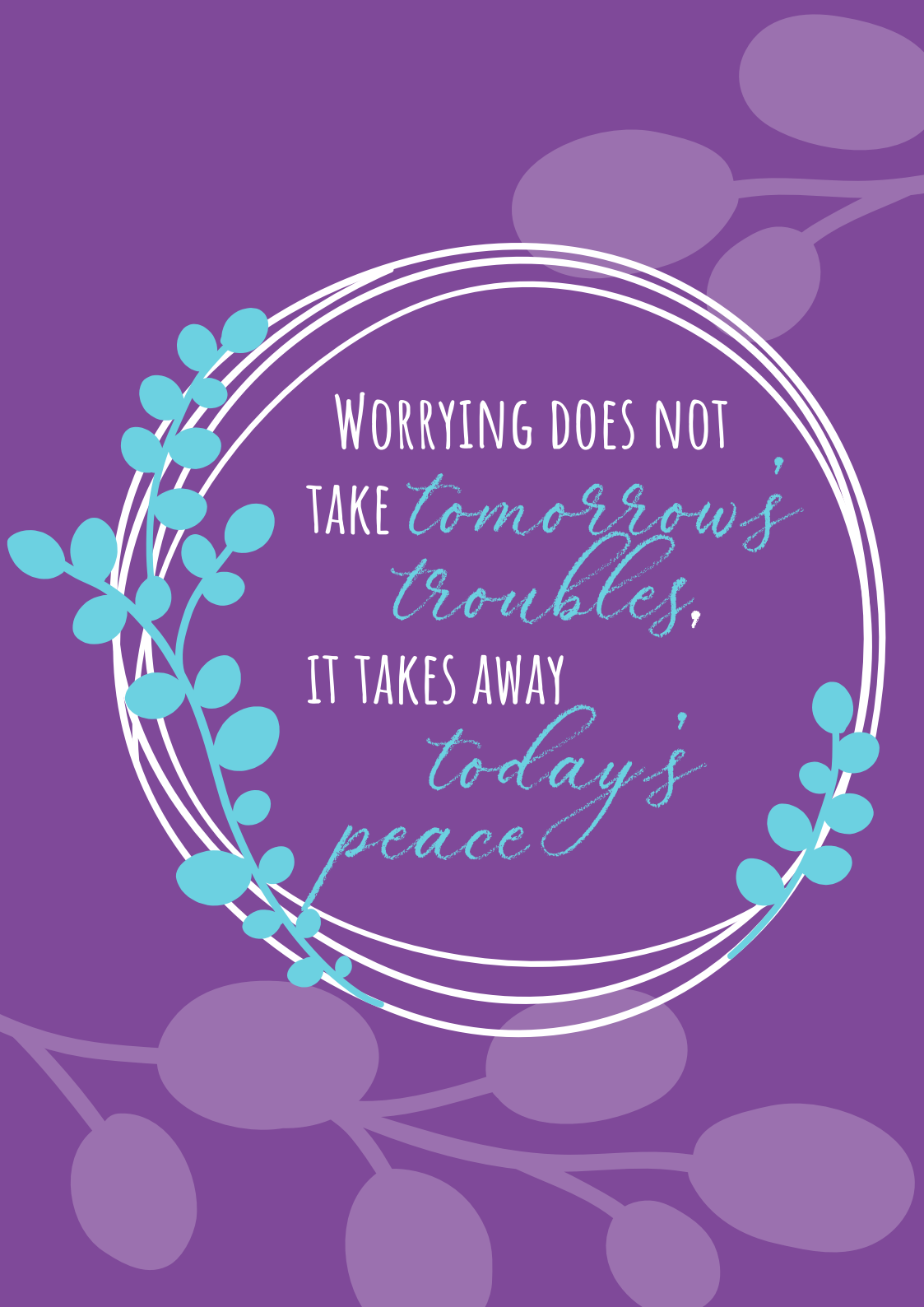


LIFE IS
NOT ALWAYS

PERFECT. LIKE A ROAD IT HAS
MANY BENDS, UPS AND DOWNS
BUT THAT'S ITS BEAUTY



ANXIETY IS
SOMETHING THAT *is*
part of me
BUT IT'S *not*
Who I am



WORRYING DOES NOT
TAKE *tomorrow's*
troubles,
IT TAKES AWAY
today's
peace

The background is a vibrant green with stylized palm trees and tropical foliage in shades of green and pink. A large, white, irregularly shaped circle is centered on the page, containing the text.

Sometimes
the **MOST IMPORTANT**
THING in a whole
day is the rest taken
between **TWO DEEP**
BREATHS



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

