

# Employee Health and Wellbeing

## Staying Well over the Festive Season

December 2021

While the festive period is often associated with togetherness, joy and celebration, for many it can be a time of high stress, anxiety and loneliness, and financial concerns, family demands and intense work pressure can all contribute to this. For this reason, it's more important during the festive period than ever to prioritise your wellbeing. This month we will be exploring ways to care for yourself.

### Connecting with others

Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, the festive season can come with feelings of loneliness, so it's important to reach out to others and connect:

Volunteering can be a great way to connect with new people. You may wish to join a foodbank, co-operative or perhaps a charity such as Age Cymru to help others who experience loneliness. You can [find volunteering opportunities in Cardiff at Volunteer Cardiff](#) or across Wales on the [Dewis Cymru website](#).

Try to prioritise some quality time with those in your life – whether that's making time to have lunch with a colleague, turning the TV off to have a family meal together, or checking in with a friend.



# Managing Expectations

For some, the festive season can leave us feeling pressured to provide spectacular gifts, food, be sociable and for everything to be 'perfect'. All these demands, particularly during the time of COVID-19, can at times seem insurmountable. Try to manage this pressure by recognising what you do and don't have control over, and by trying not to focus on providing the 'perfect Christmas'. Instead, come back to your values and what really matters to you.

## Financial anxiety

Christmas can often lead to financial pressures, as we may feel obligated to spend beyond our means to buy perfect gifts, expensive food or socialise.



Create a realistic budget, and make the most of it using [budgeting tips](#).

Get creative - try making some of your own gifts or offer to do something as a gift.

Be honest with those around your financial situation, and find some ways together to have fun on a budget.

## Lifestyle factors

When you are under pressure, it becomes more important than ever to take care of your physical health.

- Use [tips for improving your sleep](#) to make sure you're getting enough.
- Eat a full, balanced diet. You may wish to incorporate the mindful eating exercise below to help with this.
- Exercise, using resources such as [Couch to 5k](#) and [Fit for the Fight](#) if you need support.

# Mindfulness

the festive period can be a very busy time, so it's especially important to take a moment to relax and connect with the present moment. Mindfulness techniques can help you to refocus, acknowledge your thoughts and emotions and find some calm in the chaos.

## Mindful eating

the festive season can be a time of excess, including eating and drinking. At times, it can be helpful to bring more awareness to your eating:

1. **Breathe.** Bring your attention inward by closing your eyes, breathing slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth around 10 times.
2. **Tune in to your body.** Bring your attention to the physical sensations in your stomach. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning that you don't feel any physical sensation of hunger and 10 that you feel very hungry, ask yourself "How hungry am I?". Notice the physical sensations that suggest whether you are hungry (emptiness in your stomach, shakiness, no desire to eat, stomach growling, etc.). Try not to base how you feel on when you last ate or the time of day. Instead, try to really listen to your body rather than your thoughts.
3. **Eat according to your hunger.** Now that you are can better identify your hunger signals, you can more mindfully choose what to eat, when to eat, and how much to eat.
4. **Practice peaceful eating.** At your next meal, try to slow down and continue to breathe deeply as you eat.
5. **If you don't enjoy it, don't eat it.** Take your first three bites of food mindfully, experiencing the taste, flavours, textures, and how much you are enjoying what you are eating. Make mindful choices on the food you eat based on how much you enjoy it.





# Mindful walking

Getting out and walking mindfully can help ground and relax us.

1. Begin by walking at a natural pace. As you walk, count your steps up to 10, and then start back at one again. With each step, bring your attention to the rising and falling of your foot, and the movement in your legs and the rest of your body. Notice whether your body shifts from side-to-side. If you become distracted, return to the sensation of walking. It is normal for your mind to wander; just notice and bring it back to the sensations of the present moment. Notice whether you can sense the rest of the environment around you, taking care as you walk.

2. Now, start to pay attention to the sounds around you. Wherever you are, notice the sounds around you, without labelling the sounds as 'good' or 'bad', or 'pleasant' or 'unpleasant'.

3. Next, shift your awareness to smells around you. Again, simply notice the smells around you without judging them as positive or negative.

4. Now, pay attention to what you can see: Notice the colours, shapes and movement of objects around you, coming back to the present whenever you notice your mind wondering.

5. Towards to the end of your walk, bring your attention back to the sensations in your body, of each step you move. When you're ready to finish, take a moment to stand still and notice how you feel, before moving on with your day.





# December Wellbeing Workshops

## Introduction to Compassion and Self-Care

1pm - 3pm  
Friday 3 December

## Stress Risk Assessment for Managers

9.30am - 11.30am  
Tuesday 7 December

## Wellbeing Champion Training

12pm - 4pm  
Wednesday 15 December

## Introduction to Assertiveness

1pm - 3pm  
Friday 17 December

## Health and Wellbeing Q&A Session for Managers

1.30pm  
Monday 20 December

## Staying Well over the Festive Period

9.30am - 10.30am  
Tuesday 21 December

## Further support for everyone

Contact the Employee Wellbeing Service on 02921 844465 or email [employee.wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:employee.wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk). We are now also offering video appointments through Attend Anywhere.

Health for Health Professionals Wales are providing free mental health support to all Health Professionals and Healthcare Students working in NHS Wales.

Samaritans offer a free, confidential telephone helpline where you can talk to someone about anything that is troubling you. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call: 116 123

C.A.L.L is a mental health helpline, offering a confidential listening service. The service is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call 0800 132 737 or text help to 81066.

Coming up next month... we will be exploring how to take positive steps in the New Year.

# Further wellbeing support

Welsh Government has launched the Wellbeing Conversation Guide, an online tool for the NHS and Social Care workforce that has been developed in partnership between NHS employers, Social Care Wales, trade union partners and Welsh Government.

It has been developed to help support wellbeing conversations in the workplace and identify support needs when appropriate. It's a semi-structured set of questions about the experience of work and can be used flexibly according to the situation.

All staff can access the Wellbeing Conversation Guide, from managers who may decide to use it to have conversations with their teams, to individuals who want to reflect on their own wellbeing needs. Some staff groups may decide to use it to have a collaborative conversation.

To find out more, or to access the Wellbeing Conversation Guide, please login to ESR.

Canllaw ar gyfer  
Sgyrsiau Llesiant



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Wellbeing  
Conversation Guide



Llywio Sgyrsiau Cefnogol gyda Staff y GIG a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Shaping Supportive Conversations with NHS and Social Care Staff

If you are in crisis and do not feel  
you can keep yourself safe, contact  
your GP or the emergency services  
on 999 or 111.



EMPLOYEE HEALTH &  
WELLBEING SERVICE  
Occupational Health  
Occupational Physiotherapy  
Employee Wellbeing



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Caerdydd a'r Fro  
Cardiff and Vale  
University Health Board