

HOW TO FEED YOUR MIND



mindapples
BITESIZE

Take care of your mind to maintain your health, work and relationships

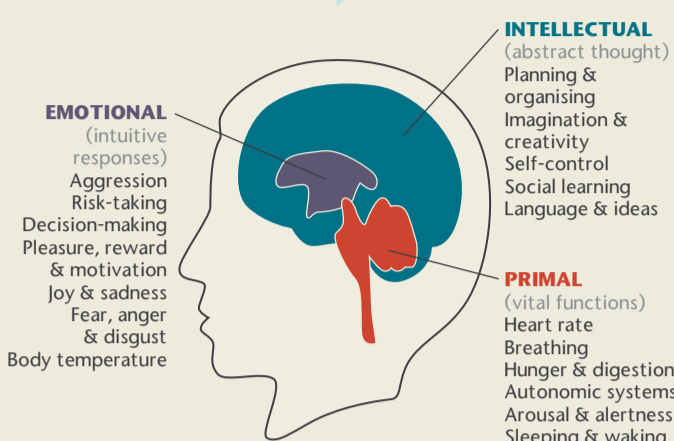
MEET YOUR MIND

We rely on our minds for everything we do, but how often do we think about how they work or how to take care of them?

Your mind is your greatest asset. Whatever you want to do, you need to know how your mind works and how to get the best from it. We all have mental health, and what we do each day affects it, so looking after our minds should be normal and natural for everyone.

So, if we can brush our teeth and eat our 5-a-day, then what can we do for our minds?

Our minds are made up of many kinds of **primal**, **emotional** and **intellectual** drives, which sometimes conflict. Looking after your mind involves listening to each part.



WHAT AFFECTS YOUR MIND?

Many factors can affect your mind, and you may only notice them unconsciously.

Your unconscious mind is like an elephant, moving on instinct, watching its environment. Your conscious mind is like its rider, planning ahead and thinking things through. Your conscious mind is good at tuning things out and focussing on one thing at a time, but your unconscious elephant is affected by all the things you've ignored. To manage your mind, you need to pay attention to how these external influences affect your mind, consciously and unconsciously.

Noises & distractions

Loud unpredictable noises can break your concentration and tire you out. Some background noise can be stimulating though, and everyone has different sensitivities. Being able to control noise levels is the key: noise that is out of your control is distracting.

Light

Sunlight wakes us up and resets our sleep patterns, producing vitamin D which is good for mental alertness and wellbeing. Watch out for digital devices though: they emit a light similar to daylight and can disrupt your mind.

Sleep

Going without sleep is bad for our minds. Sleep deprivation has similar effects to being drunk, slowing our reactions and making it harder to process information. Yet we each need different amounts of sleep to function, and we typically need less as we get older. Get as much sleep as you can, but if you can't sleep - well, try not to lose too much sleep over it.

Food & drink

Healthy, energising foods will aid your concentration and mental energy, whilst sugary foods can cause your moods and mental energy to crash, and caffeine may make you feel tense and anxious. Food isn't everything though: one of the best ways you can look after your mind is to drink water.

Good hydration is essential for cognitive performance, whilst dehydration can depress your mood. So if your mind is feeling flat or sluggish, drink more water.

Physical health

Your mind is affected by what happens to your body, and vice versa. Look after your physical health, take regular exercise and try to take care of yourself: it's hard to focus or enjoy life when you're ill or in pain.

Other people

We are instinctively social, and being with other people is good for our wellbeing and even our life expectancy. It has to be positive contact though: being bullied or discriminated against is very bad for our minds.



External influences will affect you more when you feel tired or stressed, so manage your environment, but also manage your mind.



FIVE SIMPLE WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND



Go outside

Natural light, particularly sunshine and green spaces, help your mind stay calm and energised.

Eat well

A healthy diet isn't just good for your health, it can help keep your mind fresh and focussed too.

Drink water

It's easy to do, but easy to forget. Build a habit of drinking water during the day to refresh your mind.

Take exercise

Whether you prefer gardening or kick-boxing, a little bit of exercise every day is great for your mind.

Sleep more

Try to get 6-8 hours a night, regularly, and if you haven't slept well, go easy on yourself today.

5-A-DAY FOR YOUR MIND

NEED INSPIRATION?

There are many lists of things that you can do to look after your mind. A popular one is the Five Ways to Wellbeing:

- 1. Connect.** Spend quality time with other people.
- 2. Be active.** Take some exercise, however gentle.
- 3. Take notice.** Appreciate the world around you.
- 4. Keep learning.** Mental challenge is good for us.
- 5. Give.** Helping others makes us feel good too.

What do you think? Do the Five Ways inspire you to add any other activities to your daily 'mindapples' list?

What do you do that's good for your mind?

Take a moment now to think about five things you do regularly. Make time for your mindapples every day to maintain a healthy mind.

Write your 5 mindapples here

Walk in cities
Play the piano badly
Do something I'm good at
Be myself with people
Give in to temptation at least once a day

www.mindapples.org

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

What's most important is finding things you enjoy doing every day to look after your mind. Whatever you do that's good for your mind will be much more effective if you've chosen it, and you enjoy it. Lists can suggest things to try, but only you know what your mind needs.

Think about your day-to-day "mindapples", the simple habits that keep your mind feeling fresh and focussed. Whatever you do, **make time for your mind**, because your health, work and relationships will all benefit from it.

This free tip sheet was created by Mindapples to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out more about our apps, e-learning, webinars, face-to-face training and charitable work, visit www.mindapples.org.