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# EAP Newsletter

The neurodiversity edition

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Making People Better

# The neurodiversity edition

In this month's newsletter we talk about challenging the stigma of neurodiversity, how to support young people with financial stress, ways to improve happiness and wellbeing, and how you can benefit from the clock-change.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

## Challenging the stigma of neurodiversity

13th - 19th March marks Neurodiversity Celebration Week - a week that aims to bring about worldwide neurodiversity acceptance, equality and inclusion.

This year we thought it would be helpful to explore where the term neurodiversity comes from and what classes as a neurodiverse condition.

Plus, we've shared a short guide on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) - what it is, how it impacts individuals and the strengths associated with the condition.



# Where does the term 'neurodiversity' come from?

The term neurodiversity was originally coined for a human rights advocacy purpose by the Australian social researcher, Judy Singer in 1998. Judy herself identifies as autistic.

Judy recognised that a social movement was needed for individuals with neurodivergent conditions such as autism, ADHD and dyslexia due to the lack of understanding and support for individuals.

Judy argues that we've been conditioned to believe we have to teach and learn in certain ways. The neurodiversity movement acknowledges the importance of appreciating that people learn and think differently.

The concept of neurodiversity helps us to embrace equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is a way in which we can celebrate authenticity and difference.

## What classes as a neurodivergent condition?

Being neurodivergent or in the neurominority means having a brain that works differently to that of a 'neurotypical' person. This may be a difference in social preferences, ways of learning, ways of communicating and/or ways of perceiving the environment.

There are many different neurodivergent conditions, including:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Sensory processing disorders
- Tourette syndrome.





## A short guide to ADHD

### What is ADHD?

ADHD stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. It is a neurodevelopmental condition, which means it influences how the brain functions and how neurological development is altered.

ADHD is characterised by three main features:

- Inattention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity.

These three characteristics are present in a more extreme form in those with ADHD and will have been since childhood.

Many individuals with ADHD may also have difficulty with emotional regulation and executive functioning skills such as difficulty organising, planning, focusing, and regulating emotions.

### How many people have ADHD?

Lancet and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence data tells us that 5% of children and 3-4% of adults are diagnosed with ADHD in the UK. ADHD UK estimates that 2.6 million people are living with the condition in the UK.

### ADHD - the advantages of seeing the world differently

People with ADHD have amazing strengths and talents that others do not have, such as hyperfocus, creativity, optimism, resilience, and an ability to motivate others

### Famous people with ADHD

There are many highly successful people who have shared their diagnosis of ADHD, including:



**Nicola Adams**

Double gold Olympic Champion and professional flyweight boxer



**Simone Biles**

The most decorated gymnast in history



**Bill Gates**

Co-founder of Microsoft

# How to support young people with financial stress



Financial stress is a contributing factor in our mental health that often goes unaddressed and young people are increasingly feeling the pressure...

**72%** of young people said they are 'often' or 'always' worried about money\*

**More than three-quarters** of students worry about making ends meet while at university\*\*

**35%** of students said they use their overdraft as a source of income whilst at university\*\*\*.

\*YoungMinds, Young People's Survey 2021 \*\* Lowell, 2023 \*\*\* Save the Student, National Student Money Survey, 2023

It can really help a young person if they are able to talk about their financial concerns and stressors. So to mark University Mental Health Day, which this year falls on Thursday 14th March, we've shared our top tips for parents and carers on how to talk to young people about money worries:



### Be an active listener

Let your young person know that they can talk to you at any time and about anything that is worrying them. Ensure they know you are always there to support them and when they do come to you, listen to what they have to say without passing judgement.



### Explore specific worries

Ask them what they are specifically worried about. When you have an idea of exactly what it is, you can then start planning practical ways to tackle the problem.



### Use free resources to help

There are many free resources out there that can help you and your young person with budget planning. Citizens Advice recommends using a free budget planner tool to help people figure out what they have coming in, what they're spending and where they might be able to cut costs. You can find the budget planner at [www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)



### Ensure your young person knows money does not define their worth

Encourage your young person not to compare themselves to other people and ensure they know that money does not define their worth. Financial stress can feel all-consuming and they may feel shame or guilt for struggling with finances.



### Research low-cost activities

Sit down with your young person and list out low cost or free activities they can do either on their own or with friends. Financial stress can feel isolating and it's important to help combat those negative feelings where possible.



### Contact the university and students union

Your young person's university and students' union will have money advisors on hand to offer support. Plus, many universities have hardship funds set aside for students in financial difficulty. Encourage your young person to speak to their university's union to find out how they might be able to help.



### Speak to a mental health professional

A mental health professional can help your young person to cope with the emotional load of their financial stress. Talking to someone impartial who is trained to help individuals manage their mental health can help ease their worries.



### Contact charities and organisations for support

Young people can feel very alone when they are dealing with money worries. Ensure they know there is plenty of support there for them, both from you and from professionals. Provide them with a list of money advice charities and organisations they can access for help if they need it.

Charities and organisations that can provide guidance and support:

**StepChange** | [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) | 0800 138 1111

**National Debtline** | [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org) | 0808 808 4000

**Debt Advice Foundation** | [www.debtadvicefoundation.org](http://www.debtadvicefoundation.org) | 0800 043 40 50

**Citizens Advice** | [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) | 0800 240 4420

**YoungMinds** | [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

# Eight ways to improve happiness and mental wellbeing

Every year on March 20th the world comes together to celebrate the International Day of Happiness. The day was originally established by the United Nations General Assembly to help people realise the importance of happiness within their lives.





Here are eight tips from our mental health experts here at Vita Health Group to help you feel happier, more in control and better able to cope with the rollercoaster of life.



### 1/ Listen to your body

Responding to the needs of your body with compassion can help you to feel your very best. It could be as simple as ensuring you get an early night if you feel tired, hydrating when you're thirsty, or moving your body when you feel sluggish or stiff.



### 2/ Manage your stress levels

Finding ways to reduce stress, such as using time-management techniques, talking to your manager about your workload or practising breathing techniques, can really help to improve happiness.



### 3/ Enjoy the simple pleasures in life

For years, Finland has topped the World Happiness Index. Many people say that Finnish happiness comes down to having the ability to pause and appreciate the little things in life. Enjoying simple pleasures such as clean air, walking in nature and swimming in natural waters can help to improve overall wellbeing. Try to incorporate moments of stillness into your daily routine and take note of the small things you're thankful for.



### 4/ Boost your self-esteem

One of the most effective ways to boost your self-esteem is to treat yourself as you would treat a valued friend. Acknowledge when you're putting yourself down and instead think, "What would I say to my friend?". When we beat ourselves up it can have a really negative impact on our happiness, so see if you can break the cycle.



### 5/ Limit your alcohol consumption

When life feels challenging it can be tempting to drink alcohol to mask or numb difficult feelings. However, alcohol has the power to exaggerate negative emotions and it can actually make you feel sad, angry or aggressive. Think about limiting or cutting out alcohol to prevent triggering these negative feelings.



### 6/ Give someone a compliment

Researchers have found that acts of kindness can help to promote overall wellbeing. Giving someone a compliment won't just make someone else's day brighter, it could make yours brighter too. You might be surprised by how good giving other people a compliment makes you feel.



### 7/ Connect with people

Spending time with other people and building relationships is important for mental wellbeing. It can help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth and gives you an opportunity to provide support, and be supported, by others. Try to avoid relying on technology, such as social media and texting, alone to build relationships.



### 8/ Acknowledge your unhappiness

No one is happy all the time - everyone faces challenges in life and it's normal to find things difficult or feel low. Don't brush these feelings under the rug and hope they disappear. Acknowledge and sit with your feelings, then actively shift your focus towards what it might take to recover.

# How the extra daylight can benefit you

On Sunday 31st March, the clocks spring forward as we switch over to British summer time. We might get an hour less in bed that day, but the good news is that longer and brighter days are ahead.

Here's why you should make the most of the extra daylight when the clocks change at the end of this month.





### 1/ Improves mood and alertness

Studies have illustrated that exposure to daylight, specifically morning light, can significantly improve mood and alertness. Morning light is so helpful that there's significant evidence about its use as an antidepressant. Serotonin, which is produced when sunlight enters your eyes, is often referred to as the body's natural antidepressant.



### 2/ Regulates sleep quality

Exposure to daylight in the morning can actually help you to sleep at night. Light is a critical cue for your body's sleep cycle and daylight helps to reset your body's sleep clock, also known as your circadian clock. Natural daylight - that's exposure to daylight outside - has previously been shown to advance the timing of sleep to earlier hours, affect the duration of sleep and improve sleep quality.



### 3/ Supports vital body functions

Daylight helps to regulate digestion, hormonal activity and other important psychological and bodily functions. Let's take appetite as an example. Do you notice that you're hungrier when you've had a disrupted sleep? Sleep impacts our hormone production and that includes the ones that tell your brain when you're full and when you're hungry.



### 4/ Increases feelings of revitalisation

The extra daylight hours give us more opportunity to exercise outdoors in natural environments. Studies have shown that a green exercise environment can cause greater feelings of revitalisation and positive engagement. Plus, all types of green exercise activities can improve self-esteem and reduce tension, anger and depression.

# How to make the most of the extra daylight



Schedule in a morning walk



Ensure to spend time outside on your lunch break



Take your morning drink outside



Switch your indoor gym session for an outdoor activity



Stretch in your garden, on the balcony or in the park



Meet friends for a walk before you sit down together for lunch/dinner



Walk for some or all of your commute if you can



Move small meetings to an outdoor area or arrange a walking meeting



## Our tip of the month

The one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

### Commit to improving your sleep hygiene.

Sleep is incredibly important to our physical and mental wellbeing and improving your sleep hygiene - the sleep habits you follow each day - could be game-changing for you.

To mark World Sleep Day on Friday 15th March, we've shared some tips that can help to improve your sleep routine:

1. Block out natural light at bedtime and avoid blue light exposure from devices an hour before sleeping
2. Avoid caffeine late in the day
3. Don't take long daytime naps
4. Get up and go to bed at consistent times
5. Avoid alcohol
6. Don't eat late at night
7. Relax with a breathing exercise before bedtime
8. Exercise regularly - but not before bedtime
9. Be careful how much water you consume in the evening
10. Rule out a sleep disorder - if you've struggled with sleep for a long time and are concerned about how it's impacting your life, consult a healthcare professional.

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# SilverCloud Programmes on the Wellbeing Hub

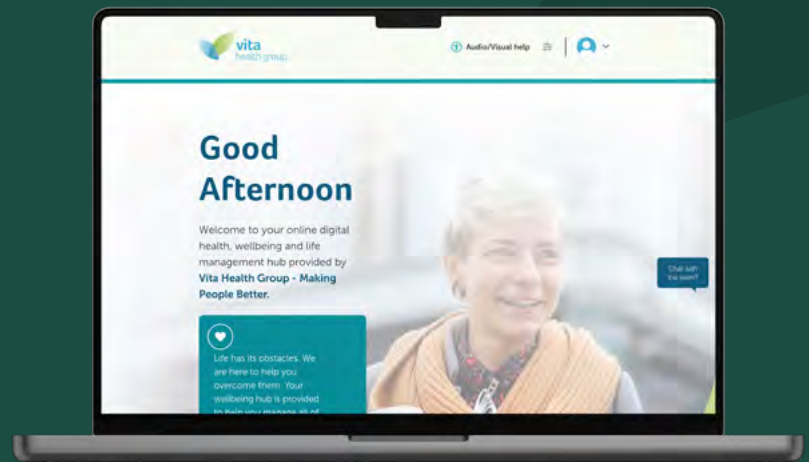


Visit our Wellbeing Hub by scanning the QR code above:

## A new way to a healthier mind

1 in 4 of us struggle with mental health challenges, like feeling low or anxious.

SilverCloud programmes provide the tools and skills to feel better and stay better, helping you to improve and maintain your wellbeing by addressing underlying issues that can have a negative impact on how you would like to live your life.



## What programmes are available?

### Wellbeing

Programmes that give you the skills to deal with everyday issues that affect your emotional health.

### Mental Health

Programmes to help alleviate the symptoms of common mental health conditions.

### Chronic Health

Programmes that focus on the mental health aspects of living with a long term condition.

## New programmes

- Space from Anxiety
- Bipolar toolkit


Based on years of clinical research, the programmes are interactive and delivered via a user-friendly platform. Programme modules are easy to use. Work through the activities, videos and content anytime on your computer, tablet, or phone.

## Visit your Wellbeing Hub

**Digital Wellbeing Programmes**, free and in confidence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use your organisational code to access the site.

[www.my-eap.com/access](http://www.my-eap.com/access)

## Contact us

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