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health group

EAP Newsletter

The New Year edition

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Making People Better

The New Year edition

In this month's newsletter, we talk about coping with the expectation of a new year, busting the myth of 'Blue Monday', the benefits of giving up alcohol and how to support someone with Dry January, and how to recover after a slip or fall.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

How to cope with the heavy expectation of a new year

Some people love to set themselves goals and resolutions in January. But for many others, the onslaught of "new year, new you" messaging - the expectation to tone our bodies, refine our minds and eliminate foods from our diet - can be a triggering time.

If you're someone who finds the guilt and shame-inducing subtext of marketing messages in January to be overwhelming, we're here to help.

Our mental health experts have shared their top three coping mechanisms to help you through the "new year, new you" onslaught:



1/ Unfollow social media accounts that make you feel bad about yourself

Social media can be a real trigger place. Ahead of the new year, dedicate some time to doing a clear out of your social media accounts - unfollow anyone or any company that, instead of bringing you joy, triggers negative emotions. Limit your time on social media and remove yourself from forums or groups that spread misinformation or use shaming language.



2/ Prepare yourself with a good support system

Whoever's helped you get through difficult times in the past, make sure they are around you for support in January. That could be anyone from a family member or colleague to a therapist or dietician. Talk to a professional if you're finding it tricky to cope with any mental health-related issue at this time



3/ Work on developing healthy habits that you can sustain

If you feel like you're punishing or controlling your diet or exercise, it will be impossible to sustain it as a healthy habit. It's about eating and moving in a way that feels good for your body - one that you can sustain and that brings you joy.

Busting the myth of 'Blue Monday'





What is 'Blue Monday'?

'Blue Monday' is the name given to the third Monday in January which has been dubbed the most depressing day of the year.

It was a term coined by a psychologist in 2004 when a travel company asked him for a scientific formula for the January blues for a marketing campaign.

Although the psychologist has since said he believes 'Blue Monday' is a "self-fulfilling prophecy" unfortunately the label of 'Blue Monday' stuck and is still used by companies today to promote deals that offer an escape from the stresses and pressures of life.

What's the problem with 'Blue Monday'?

We all experience good and bad days, and the calendar can't dictate when those are. The term 'Blue Monday' contributes to damaging preconceptions about depression and trivialises an illness that can be life-threatening.

Instead, let's mark the day as 'Brew Monday'

In a bid to put a stop to the myth about the third Monday in the year being the bluest, Samaritans have renamed the day 'Brew Monday' - a day to start a conversation with family, friends, colleagues, and loved ones over a brew.

Eight tips to help someone open up about how they're feeling

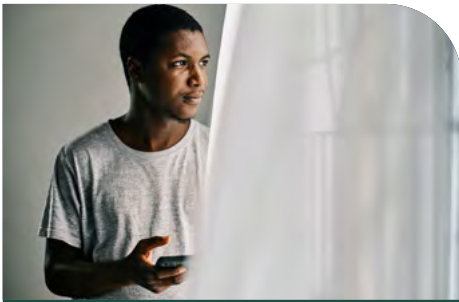
You don't have to be a mental health expert to help someone open up. The main thing is that you're there to support them:



1/ Choose a good time



2/ Opt for a place without distractions



3/ Avoid closed questions that prompt a yes or no response



4/ Use open-ended questions: "How are things with you?" "How do you feel about that?" "How is that impacting your life?"



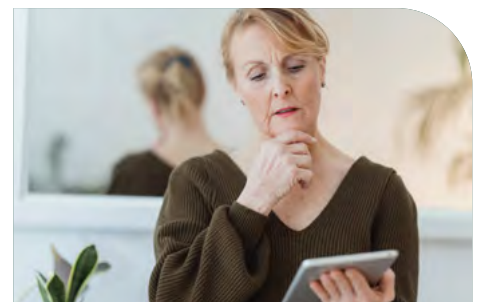
5/ Listen respectfully and avoid jumping in and cutting the person off



6/ However tempting it might be, avoid giving your view or opinion of what they should do



7/ Let them know you're there to support them anytime



8/ Steer them towards professional help: Have you considered speaking with your GP?"

Everything you need to know about Dry January

Dry January started in 2013 with 4,000 people committing to abstaining from alcohol for a month. Now in its 10th year, it's come a long way since then, with over 130,000 taking part in 2022.

It's gained popularity as a way for individuals to re-evaluate their relationship with alcohol, promote healthier habits and potentially experience both physical and mental benefits.



Four ways alcohol changes the body

1

It gives your body work to do that keeps it from other processes

When you take a drink, your body prioritises metabolising it, above processing anything else. This is why alcohol affects the liver - your liver must work to detoxify and remove alcohol from your blood.

2

Abusing alcohol causes bacteria to grow in your gut

These bacteria can migrate through the intestinal wall and into the liver, resulting in liver damage.

3

Frequently drinking can affect your immune system

If you drink alcohol frequently - every day or almost every day - you may have noticed that you catch illnesses such as colds, coughs and the flu quite frequently. This happens because alcohol can weaken the immune system, making the body more vulnerable to infections.

4

It can impact fertility

A common side-effect of alcohol abuse in men is erectile dysfunction. In women, it may cause irregular menstrual cycles or stop the period altogether due to an increased level of hormones.

How you could benefit from eliminating or reducing your alcohol intake



Physical health

Even a short break from alcohol can lead to improved sleep, increased energy levels, and better hydration.



Weight loss

Reduced alcohol intake may contribute to weight loss as alcoholic beverages often contain a significant number of calories.



Mental clarity

Abstaining from alcohol can lead to enhanced mental clarity and improved cognitive function. Better mood and reduced anxiety are common benefits reported by individuals who participate in Dry January.



Save money

Cutting out alcohol for a month can result in significant financial savings, highlighting the economic impact of a regular drinking habit.

Six ways to have a brilliant Dry January

1/ Team up with a friend

Doing Dry January with a friend or in a group is a great way to stay committed. You can hold each other accountable, turn to one another when it gets tough and encourage each other to keep going.

2/ Write down your motivation

Why have you committed to Dry January this year? Write down all the reasons - what you hope to gain, how you hope this will impact you, and how will you feel when you've succeeded. Make your list visible by sticking it on the wall, putting it on the fridge or putting it on the bathroom mirror. Daily reminders will help to see you through to the end.

3/ Tell your friends, colleagues, and loved ones

Share your commitment to Dry January with those closest to you. They may surprise you by offering support and helping you to keep on track.

4/ Plan ahead for occasions when alcohol is on offer

It's likely that you'll end up somewhere alcohol is on offer during the month - a work dinner, a catch-up with friends or a family meal. The best thing you can do is to plan ahead and decide ahead of time how you will manage the situation.

5/ Don't beat yourself up over a slip-up

Drinking alcohol doesn't need to mean the end of your dry month. If you do have a slip-up, reflect on why it might have happened and what you could do next time to stop it from happening again.

6/ Put the money you'd have spent on alcohol aside

If you're in a situation where, outside of Dry January, you would have drunk alcohol, put aside the money you'd have spent. Not drinking will likely save you money and at the end of the month you'll have a pot saved for a rainy day.

Do you know someone who's trying to cut down on, or has given up alcohol? Here's how you can support them.



Respect their choices and be mindful of triggers.

The pressure to drink in social situations can make Dry January tricky. Respect the individual's decision to give up alcohol. Avoid judgement and instead offer encouragement.

Suggest alcohol-free activities.

Sports and outdoor activities (even in the winter) can be a great distraction from alcohol. If possible, avoid pubs and bars when you're making plans.

Check-in and celebrate the milestones.

Positive reinforcement can be really motivating. Set a reminder to check in with your friend, family member or colleague at points throughout the month to see how they're doing. Let them know that they have your full support.

Help them find professional help.

If someone you know is struggling with alcohol dependency, encourage them to find professional help. Offer support in finding resources such as counselling or support groups. www.alcoholchange.org has some great resources available and can signpost you to the right support.

How to recover after a slip or fall





How to recover after a slip or fall - the five key steps

People often associate having a slip or fall with people in older generations. But in reality, the victims of nearly 70% of falls happen to people aged 65 and under.

Although many people come away unscathed, a fall can cause a lot of pain and the consequences can be severe.

With that in mind, the musculoskeletal specialists here at Vita Health Group have shared a quick step-by-step guide on what to do if you fall.

After experiencing a slip or fall, it's important to take immediate action from both a physiotherapy and an emergency standpoint.

Step 1/ In the immediate aftermath, prioritise safety

Check for any potential hazards that may have caused the fall and ensure the area is secure.

Step 2/ Call 999 if there are signs of serious injury

If there are any signs of severe injury - such as bleeding, fractures, or head trauma - call 999 or seek immediate medical attention.

Step 3/ Follow the PRICE protocol

From a physiotherapy perspective, following the PRICE protocol is essential:

Protect the injured area by immobilising it
Rest to prevent further damage
Ice to reduce swelling and inflammation
Compress the area with a bandage
Elevate it to minimise swelling and promote circulation.

Step 4/ Consult a physiotherapist

Once your immediate concerns have been addressed, consult with a physiotherapist for a thorough assessment and personalised rehabilitation plan to facilitate a full recovery. This will help to address not only the physical but also the psychological aspects of healing and injury prevention.

Step 5/ Commit to the physiotherapy plan

Long-term follow-up and consistent adherence to the physiotherapy plan are crucial for a successful recovery and prevention of future injuries.



Our tip of the month

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

Health check your finances.

Many of us face financial pressures in January - winter house bills need paying, Christmas credit cards need clearing and food prices remain high. No matter how daunting finances may feel, acting early will offer you the best chance of a smoother financial ride through 2024.

1/ Review your spending

Take a really good look at what you're spending. Write down everything from the coffees and snacks you buy to gym memberships and the bigger bills you're committed to. Shop around for better deals where you can, such as phone, broadband and insurance. And look at where you can make cutbacks.

2/ Set out a budget

Setting a budget for each month will help to keep your spending under control. There are some great resources to help, including the MoneySkills app which provides information and guidance on how to budget.

3/ Save small and often

Set up a monthly direct debit into a savings account, timed for just after you're paid. You might be surprised and just how quickly even a small amount can add up.

4/ Set longer-term financial goals

Everyone's financial goals will be different. For some people, it might be a dream holiday, whilst for others it could be upgrading a car or being debt-free. Defining your goal - whatever that may be - will give you a great incentive to save.

5/ Find professional help quickly if you need it

Money worries are the most common cause of anxiety. There's a clear link between financial stress and poor mental health and those who experience both are faced with a double taboo. Know that there are many people and professional organisations out there to help you. For free and independent help on debt, contact:

Stepchange | www.stepchange.org | 0800 138 1111

National Debtline | www.nationaldebtline.org | 0808 808 4000

SilverCloud Programmes on the Wellbeing Hub

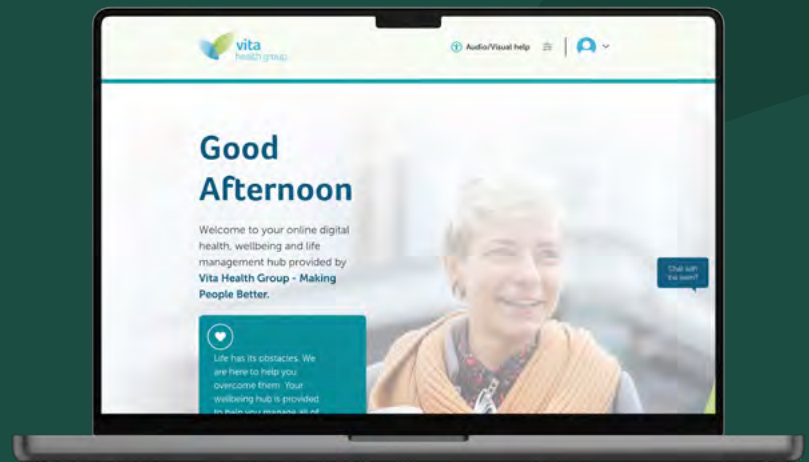


Visit our Wellbeing Hub by scanning the QR code above:

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

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