

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white wide-brimmed hat and a white long-sleeved shirt, is sitting on a large, mossy rock in a lush green forest. She is looking upwards and to the left with a serene expression. The background is filled with dense green foliage.

Your 10 day
WELLBEING
GUIDE

Wellbeing + Self-care + You + Happiness

It all adds up to

Livability

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Hello and welcome

As we emerge from the pandemic, as a country, a community and as individuals we have never experienced (in our lifetime) a more threatening time for our wellbeing.

As we find new ways of living alongside Covid-19 and processing the losses of that time, we are faced with startling news around the cost of living crisis in UK. These resources, published by Livability, are designed to help you navigate your wellbeing in a way that suits you.

How to use this guide

This 10-day wellbeing guide is one resource in a pack designed for you and for your community. Inside you'll find a daily theme with a challenge to help you put into action what you've learnt. These themes have been written by Emma Browning, our Wellbeing Programmes Manager, who has a wealth of experience in wellbeing from the Livability Flourish service at Holton Lee.

This guide is a great place to start, although the resources can be enjoyed in any order. If you have finished this guide, we recommend you try the Wellbeing Journal next. This is a free template to get a little deeper with some of the pillars of wellbeing.

If you enjoy the guide, please share it on by encouraging others to sign up to hear more about our work here: www.livability.org.uk/lifesum



Mood and Food

Sometimes making small changes in our life, like changing our diet, can have a significant impact on our wellbeing. Knowing what foods we should and shouldn't be eating can be really confusing, especially when it feels like the advice changes regularly.

Tips on how to improve your wellbeing through food:

- 1 Eating regularly** – Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out regularly throughout the day. This will help to regulate your sugar levels.
- 2 Stay hydrated** – If you don't drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to think clearly. 6–8 glasses of water is recommended.
- 3 Get your 5 a day** – Vegetables and fruit contain a lot of the minerals, vitamins and fibre we need to keep us physically and mentally healthy.
- 4 Eat enough protein** – Protein contains amino acids make up the chemicals your brain needs to regulate your thoughts and feelings.
- 5 Manage caffeine** – It can make you feel anxious and depressed, disturb your sleep, or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly.
- 6 Eat the right fats** – Your brain needs fatty acids (such as omega-3 and -6) to keep it working well. Healthy fats are found in: oily fish, poultry, nuts, seeds, cheese and eggs.



Challenge of the day:

Eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables in 1 day.

Money and Mental Health

Spending can give us a brief high, so sometimes people can fall into a trap of spending just to feel better. Whether it's impulse buying, trying to money-manage or simply spending money, all of these can cause us to feel anxious or panicky.

Tips on improving your wellbeing through money management:

- 1 Online spending** – Not saving your card details into websites this can act as a way of making it more difficult to spend money online.
- 2 Delay purchasing** – Instead of purchasing impulsively in the moment, delay until tomorrow to see if you still want it, or add it to a wish list instead.
- 3 Distractions** – Do something else that makes you feel good. Go for a walk, call a friend or watch something that you enjoy.
- 4 Budgeting** – Create a realistic budget that you can afford and stick to.
- 5 Limit your access to money** – Manage your cash or bank accounts so that you are able to limit yourself weekly to what you can afford to spend on.
- 6 Organising your documents** – Put all your important documents in one place. Keep letters, statements, payslips, bills and receipts somewhere easy to find.
- 7 Use various platforms** – Find a way of connecting with your bank that is not stressful for you, whether it is the app, website or calling the customer line.
- 8 Manage your debts** – There are lots of great services offering support out there to help you manage debt. Find one that helps you!
- 9 Identify your triggers** – See what causes you to purchase impulsively and this realisation can help you manage those triggers.



Challenge of the day:

Determine a realistic weekly spending amount.

Worrying too much

It is hard to stop worrying because it becomes a habit and we all know that habits are hard to break. "Normal" worrying becomes excessive when it's persistent, feels out of your control and interferes with your daily life.



Tips on improving your wellbeing through worrying a little less:

- 1 Create a daily 'worry' period** – Rather than trying to stop anxious thoughts, give yourself permission to have them for a set period of time. Choose a time early enough that you don't go to bed anxious.
- 2 Identify the difference** – Aim to focus on the things you have the power to change, rather than the circumstances or fictional realities beyond your control, as it really is a waste of our valuable energy.
- 3 Accept uncertainty** – Thinking about things that could go wrong doesn't make life more predictable. Focusing on worst-case scenarios will only keep you from enjoying the things you have going on in the present.
- 4 Interrupt the worry cycle** – The best way to break a mental habit is to take your attention away from it, to take the fuel from the fire. So instead of worrying, do something else that requires your attention.
- 5 Build a support system** – When your worries start spiralling, talking them over with someone else can make them seem far less threatening.
- 6 Challenge anxious thoughts** – Ask yourself key questions to see whether the reality is as bad as you perceive or whether you are focusing on the negatives with no evidence and filtering out the positives.



Challenge of the day:

Create and practise a daily 'worry' period.

Arrival fallacy

It is not uncommon to project into the future and visualise 'better' versions of ourselves. But arrival fallacy is the illusion – that once we reach our goals, we reach happiness. Whilst it is important for our wellbeing to have goals in life, it is not helpful to believe that external achievements have the power to completely transform us.

Dr Ben-Shahar, in his book *Happier: Can You Learn To Be Happy?* proposes that – as opposed to monetary or material success – 'the number one predictor of happiness is the quality time we spend with the people we care about and who care about us'.



Tips on combating arrival fallacy:

- 1 Enjoy today** – Allowing ourselves to mentally live in the future keeps us from enjoying whatever is going on in the present moment right now. This can lead to us neglecting the people, places and opportunities around us. Shift your focus off the destination and let yourself focus on appreciating the present.
- 2 Identify your own values** – We are often pushed to be top of the class, because the people around us wanted us to be successful. However, when our goals are set by others they rarely reflect our values. Decide your own goals and when you achieve them, you are more likely to feel content for longer.
- 3 Manage your expectations** – We often confuse expectation with desire, meaning when we want to achieve something we expect that new job, partner, or anything to solve our problems. The reality is, if you expect to have all your needs met once you meet a certain goal, you are going to end up disappointed.



Challenge of the day:

Do one activity that lets you live in the moment (e.g sports, meet a friend, watch a movie, etc.)

Growing for Wellbeing

There is strong evidence highlighting the mental and physical health benefits of gardening, from creating a sense of accomplishment, connecting with something bigger than yourself, gaining meaning and purpose, to a burst of outdoor exercise and improving self-esteem and concentration.



Healthy garden, healthy you

- 1 Have a vision** – Gardeners often have a clear vision for their gardening. In the same way, having a clear vision for your life can be equally productive.
- 2 Gardens need prioritising** – In gardening, you can't possibly grow everything instantly. Once you've listed what you want in life it's key to prioritise your list down to the things that are achievable.
- 3 You need good soil** – Plants don't grow well in poor soil. To achieve in life, you need to create a strong foundation with support networks and healthy habits.
- 4 Walk your own path** – Where one gardener sees a weed, another might see a beauty. Likewise, we need confidence to walk our own path.
- 5 Build a fence around your garden** – If you want a pest-free garden, you need to build a fence around it. In the same way, in life we need to set boundaries.
- 6 Gardens need tending** – Just as gardens need constant care and attention to bear fruit, we need the same nurturing attitude towards ourselves.
- 7 Learn to deal with things outside of your control** – Sun, rain and animals are beyond our control when gardening. Similarly, having a life attitude of 'it is what it is', towards the things we can't control, is a very healthy one.
- 8 Reap your harvest** – After all your hard work, your garden should start producing a bountiful crop. Similarly, enjoy all the good that your hard work has brought into your life.



Challenge of the day:

Create and prioritise a list of 5 small things you want to achieve.

How the News Affects Our Wellbeing

As humans, we have a bias toward choosing negative information over positive. Especially in this modern day, bad news still travels faster than any other information.

Did you know?

- Approximately 90% of all media news is negative
- Nielsen ratings are at fault for 50% of negative news statistics
- Watching too much negative news can change how we see the world
- Studies show that headlines with bad news catch 30% more attention
- 63% of children aged 12–18 say that watching the news makes them feel bad

How to balance out negative news

- 1 Reduce your news intake** – You can opt out of negative news loops and decrease your news intake. Many people report feeling a greater sense of wellbeing when they take a break from engaging with news platforms.
- 2 Seek positive news** – Make a conscious decision to search for out news that will make you happy. A number of positive news websites and publications are trying to redress our negativity news bias – take a look at the Positive News magazine.



Challenge of the day:

Find 1 news article that makes you happy.

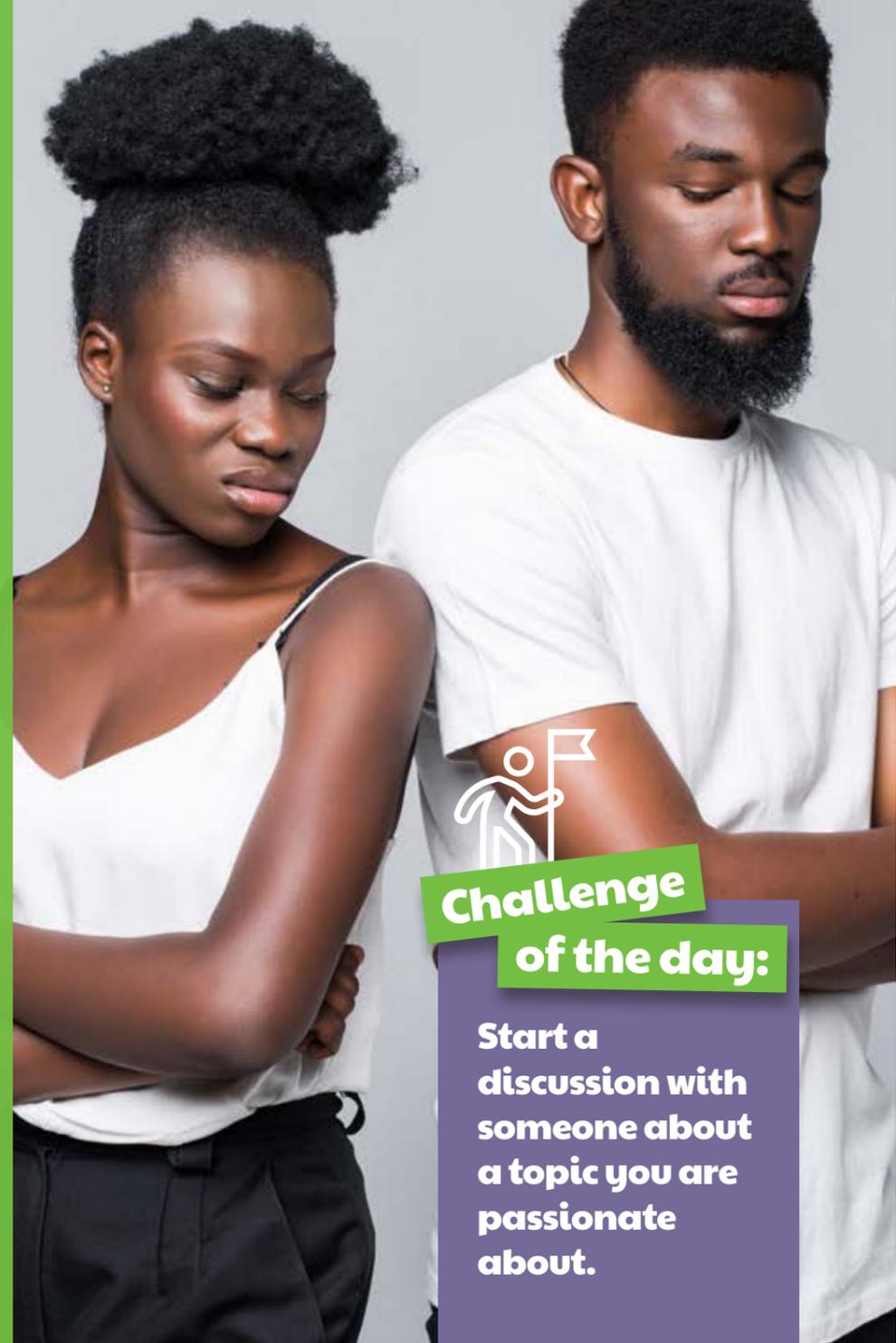
Defusing arguments

Avoiding excessive amounts of cortisol and adrenaline is a good way to keep the body healthy and reduce the risk of stress-related health problems. At times, arguing can feel like a good way to make yourself heard and express your feelings but continuous and unproductive arguing can put a strain on our relationships with others.



Tips on constructive conversations

- 1 What I heard you say is?** – Most people get angriest when they feel dismissed. Repeating back what someone said makes that person feel heard.
- 2 What's your biggest concern?** – Asking them to tell you what worries them the most can help them to open up to expressing their true fears are.
- 3 What do you need right now?** – You've also opened the door to finding a constructive compromise, since solving their most immediate problems may help shine a light on a bigger and more permanent solution.
- 4 How are you feeling?** – This is a great phrase to use early in conversations as it invites them to check if their emotional state is affecting the interaction. This can also give you a better understanding of the person's stance.
- 5 What if?** – 'What if' statements can turn conflict on its head and open the door to solutions that work for both of you.
- 6 Can we focus on all the things we agree on?** – This sentence forces you to look for the common ground and it helps to see the other person as someone who's not that different from yourself.
- 7 Let's take a break until...** – Sometimes all people need to avoid conflict is a little time apart to get over feeling angry and get a fresh perspective.



Challenge of the day:

Start a discussion with someone about a topic you are passionate about.

Forest bathing

The fast-paced times we are living in make huge demands on our attention and energy and negatively affect our wellbeing. To combat our demanding schedules, a trip to a forest or smaller woodland can offer a range of wellbeing benefits, from time away from work and home, to a quiet space for contemplation and reflection.



Top tips for forest bathing:

- 1 Turn off your devices** – give yourself the best chance of relaxing, being mindful and enjoying a sensory forest-based experience.
- 2 Slow down** – Move through the forest slowly so you can see and feel more.
- 3 Take long breaths** – Breathe deep into the abdomen. Extending the exhalation of air to twice the length of the inhalation sends a message to the body that it can relax.
- 4 Sensations** – Stop, stand or sit. What can you smell around you?
- 5 Take in your surroundings** – Use all of your senses. How does the forest environment make you feel? Be observant, look at nature's small details.
- 6 Sit quietly using mindful observation** – Try to avoid thinking about your to-do list or issues related to daily life. You might be surprised by the number of wild forest inhabitants you see, using this process.
- 7 Keep your eyes open** – The colours of nature are soothing and studies have shown that people relax best while seeing greens and blues.
- 8 Duration** – Stay as long as you can, start with a comfortable time limit and build up to the recommended two hours for a complete forest bathing experience.



Challenge of the day:

Go for a long walk in the park without any electronics.

Pomodoro Technique

Developed by Francesco Cirillo, owner of a consulting firm that specialises in productivity and efficiency, the Pomodoro Technique is designed to boost productivity on large tasks that require creative mental energy. Its unusual name comes from the tomato-shaped timer he initially used to develop the technique (pomodoro is Italian for tomato).

How does it work:

- 1 Choose a task** – Something big, something small, something you've been putting off for a million years: it doesn't matter. What matters is that it's something that deserves your full, undivided attention.
- 2 Make an oath to yourself:** Set a timer for 25 minutes and spend 25 minutes on this task and do not interrupt or distract yourself. You can do it – after all, it's just 25 minutes!
- 3 Work on the task until the timer rings** – Immerse yourself in the task for the next 25 minutes. If you suddenly realise you have something else you need to do, write the task down on a sheet of paper.
- 4 Tick it off** – When the timer rings, tick that session off on a list and reward yourself – you've just spent an entire 25 minutes, interruption-less on a task.
- 5 Take a short break** – Breathe, meditate, grab a cup of coffee, go for a short walk or do something else relaxing (i.e. not work-related). Your brain will thank you later.
- 6 Start again** – every four pomodoros, take a longer break. Once you've completed four pomodoros, you can take a longer break. 20-30 minutes is good. Your brain will use this time to assimilate new information and rest, before the next round of pomodoros.




Challenge of the day:

Try the Pomodoro Technique once

Giving and Helping Others

Helping others doesn't just make the world better—it also makes you better. Wherever you live, there are always ways to help others. Whether it is putting out food for animals, or supporting a charity for the homeless, this is an easy way to feel that you are making an important contribution to humanity.

How does giving improve your wellbeing?

- 1 Creates happiness** – Helping others promotes physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness, due to increased social connections and a sense of reward.
- 2 Stress management** – Improves your ability to manage stress better, as it increases your sense of life satisfaction and enhances feelings of self-worth/esteem.
- 3 Contagious** – Helping is contagious and studies have found that people are more likely to perform acts of generosity after observing another do the same, which can lead on to create a happy ripple effect.
- 4 Improves empathy** – Helping others can take you out of the centre of your universe for a while, enabling you to increase your empathy for others and give you the perspective to reflect on the good things in your life.
- 5 Activism cure** – If you've been through a tough experience or just have a case of the blues, paying forward with an act of kindness is a great way to get back to feeling good again.




Challenge of the day:

Perform 1 act of kindness that helps others.

Who are Livability?

We are a wellbeing-driven charity. At Livability we provide care, education and rehabilitation support for people with disabilities. This summer we are launching a pack of wellbeing resources available to all, for free, in light of this.

Livability is the disability charity that's committed to enabling children, young people and adults to live a life that adds up for them.

Wellbeing looks different for each of the hundreds of children, young people and adults with disabilities who use Livability's services. That's why our brand is built around a sum, as we say

it takes lots of different things to 'add up' to better wellbeing, we call it a 'life sum'. What adds up in your life to better or good wellbeing? You can have a go at constructing your own life sum in the resource titled *What's your Life Sum?* Also available in this series.

We hope these resources help you start to uncover that - maybe you could even think about your own life sum - Then let us know what you did - tweet or post to @LivabilityUK

If you'd like to find out more about our work in this area please visit: www.livability.org.uk/lifsum

It all adds up to

Livability

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