



# Five ways to good mental wellbeing & Judaism

You might find it useful to consider the following five steps to improve your mental health and wellbeing, as recommended by the NHS. Practicing each of the five ways to wellbeing every day can have a very positive impact on your mood and wellbeing. These are also things which are encouraged in the Jewish tradition.

# One Connect with other people



**“Community is society with a human face –  
the place where we know we’re not alone.”**

(RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS)

**Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing as they can:**

- Help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Give you an opportunity to share experiences – both the joys and challenges of every day living
- Provide emotional support and allow you to support others

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The Jewish community is fortunate to have many groups and organisations that offer support, help and friendship. By connecting with our community and tradition we can boost our wellbeing and build our resilience.

Finding a way of connecting with others that’s right for you can help your mental health and wellbeing – whether that be through prayer in a congregation, studying Torah with your havruta (learning partner), playing in a Jewish Sunday league football team or attending an event organised by a Jewish charity.

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**To help connect with others, you could:**

- Find a club or group to join – you could start by looking at JW3’s [upcoming events](#)
- Reach out to a community organisation for example, a local synagogue, youth movement, sports team or networking group
- Get involved by volunteering for a charity that means something to you
- Visit one of Jami’s [Head Room Cafés](#)
- Share Jewish culture with friends and colleagues, for example through sharing food related to upcoming festivals or Challah on Fridays

**Even if you’re not able to meet up with friends and family, there are still things you can do to stay connected to them:**

- Put five minutes aside to call or text someone to find out how they are
- Keep an eye on family and friends, especially the older generation who may struggle with loneliness. You could join [Jewish Care’s](#) Telephone Befriending service or become a [Barnet Health Champion](#).
- Find free, safe and [online mental health support](#)

## Two

# Be physically active



**“When keeping the body in health and vigour, one walks in the way of G-d.”**

— (MAIMONIDES, MISHNEH TORAH, HILKHOT DEOT 4:1)

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**Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness, it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:**

- Raising your self-esteem
- Reducing loneliness and isolation through group activities and help you manage anxiety and depression
- Lowering your risk of long-term health conditions, such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers
- Helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- Boosting your mood

Being physically active is also encouraged by Judaism.

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**Regular exercise is really important, and you should try to maintain an active lifestyle, if you're well enough. You could:**

- Join a community sports team, whether that's football, netball, cricket or running
- Try [Israeli dancing](#) or a Zumba group
- Try the [10-45 minute workouts on the NHS website](#)
- Contact [Maccabi GB](#) to find ways to get involved in Jewish sport in a way that is right for you
- A walk outside can reinvigorate us by spending time in nature
- You could try a [healthy heritage walk](#), where you can be physically active whilst listening to interesting stories about historical and natural points of interest in Barnet

# Three Learn something new each day



**Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learns from every person.**

— PIRKEI AVOT 4:1

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**Knowledge and learning are highly valued in Judaism. Research shows that learning can improve your mental wellbeing by:**

- Boosting self-confidence, raising self-esteem and reducing depression
- Helping you to gain a sense of purpose
- Connecting you with others
- By studying new ideas together

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**There are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life. You could:**

- Learn a traditional Jewish recipe to share with family and friends
- Speak to family to learn more about your own family history
- Try one of JW3's [online learning courses](#) or take a virtual visit to the [Jewish Museum](#)
- Learn a new skill or enhance an old one
- Sign up for an online course (e.g. through [FutureLearn](#)) or check out [Jami's Head Room Education](#) programme to learn about your mental health
- Work on a DIY project – there are lots of free video tutorials online
- Try a new activity or join an interest group at [Age UK in Barnet](#)

# Four

## Give to others



## On Three Things the World Stands: On God's Teaching (Torah), on Prayer (Avodah), and on Acts of Lovingkindness (Gemilut Hasadim).

— PIRKEI AVOT, 1:2

Tzedakah (acts of giving) and chesed (kindness) are key parts of Jewish life. Giving to others is one of the 613 mitzvot (commandments) and is also known to help improve mental wellbeing by:

- Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- Helping you connect with other people

From small acts of kindness to more regular giving, such as volunteering, it's vital that we show compassion to everyone. Giving is broader than providing monetary gifts or physical gifting. You can give to others through sharing your time, kindness, conversation and knowledge.

### You could:

- Find a volunteering opportunity you're passionate about through the [Jewish Volunteering Network](#)
- Ask friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listen to their answer
- Join a social action project you're passionate about. Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) is a key theme in Judaism.
- Visit the [Mitzvah Day](#) website to find available projects
- Try and recycle more to help look after our planet – the Torah says that we were placed in the Garden of Eden **“to work it and protect it” (Bereshit, 2:15).**

# Five

# Pay attention to how you feel



Being aware of how you feel is just as important as paying attention to your physical health. Some people find mindfulness - a form of meditation - a helpful addition to their self-care. If mindfulness doesn't feel right for you, it may be beneficial to ask a health professional what else may be more helpful for you.

Prayer can also be a place for mindfulness and reflection, whether as a personal moment or in communal workshop at a Synagogue. By coming to prayer and practice with kavanah (intentionality), you can elevate consciousness and connection when performing prayer or mitzvot (commandments).

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### Some of the potential benefits of mindfulness are:

- Improves your sleep
- Relieve stress
- Reduce chronic pain
- Lifts inner sense of self

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Taking time to reflect and focus is also important in Judaism. Switching off technology on Shabbat or taking a moment to reflect on the past week can help you to take a moment of time out of a busy schedule for yourself.

Shabbat enables many Jews to focus on the present and leave behind the stresses of the working week, spending time with loved ones, friends or family.

### You could also:

- Focus with intention in prayer, for example, when reciting the daily Shema
- Go outdoors and reflect in nature
- Download a mindfulness app – visit the [Good Thinking's app library](#) for recommendations
- Listening to [Good Thinking's podcast about mindfulness](#)

# About Us

Good Thinking is supported by the NHS and London borough councils. We provide free, 24/7, digital support to Londoners seeking mental health advice and help regardless of where they are on their journey. We offer round the clock support and self-care options that are easy to access, and simple to navigate.

# Our Mission

We support individuals to look after their mental wellbeing in a way that works best for them. We encourage everyone to be proactive about their mental health and we provide tools and guidance to support this. If you need further support try talking to your GP.

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For more information visit [www.good-thinking.uk](http://www.good-thinking.uk)

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This text has been adapted by Philippa Carr and Karen Wilson from Jami, in consultation with Rabbi Miriam Berger and Rabbi Daniel Epstein.