

# Your Wellbeing Programme



**Gingerbread**  
Single parents, equal families



# Introduction

Welcome to *Your Wellbeing Programme*. It has been developed by Gingerbread in consultation with single parents and experts and aims to offer a fresh approach to the way we manage the challenges in our lives.

There are six sections to progress through at a pace that suits you. Each section poses different questions about aspects of wellbeing and health that are designed to help build a picture of what works best for each individual.

*Your Wellbeing Programme* can improve and boost your physical and emotional health. It can reduce stress and anxiety and bring your body back into a state of healthy balance. It achieves this because your mind, emotions, mood, and physical body are all closely connected.

We hope you enjoy the programme and find health and wellbeing through using it.

## Gingerbread Peer Support team

There are [guided audio exercises](#) to help you with your wellbeing as you go along. Click on this symbol to download the audio.



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## Acknowledgements



# 1. Connection 🏠

Being connected is a normal and natural experience. People do it all the time but they don't always recognise that it is happening.

It can happen when you are out walking in the woods, listening to music, or seeing a friend's smile. Or smelling a flower, saying a prayer, or enjoying the sun in a blue sky. It might happen too while you are running, swimming or watching sport. Or being creative. Or reading. Or just sitting with your family.

In these moments something shifts in your mood. It is a good feeling. An inner smile. It may last for a moment or it may last longer. These moments are what make life meaningful.





So, here is what might be the most important question in the whole programme:

**When are the times you most easily connect with the goodness, wonder and energy of life?**

**Think back to a particular moment of connection... Write it down.**





# Your list of connections

List in the boxes things that have touched your heart and connected you with the goodness, wonder and energy of life.  
Write down anything that has touched or opened your heart.

Music

TV programmes, films or plays

Books

Places

Hobbies and activities

Smells and aromas

People, friends and family

Touch, textures and sensations



## Your list of connections continued...

What other things help you connect you with the goodness, wonder and energy of life?

Animals and pets

Being, or worshipping in a sacred place

Colours

Sounds

Memories

*Do you have a memory of a beautiful moment that always makes you smile and touches your heart? Write down a few words that will remind you of it.*

Anything else you would like to add? (You can add new connections as you go along)



# The natural world

For many people nature is where they most easily connect with life's wonder and goodness.

The natural world is good for our health. Built into our biology is a positive response to the natural world.

This is sometimes called  
**'biophylia'** – the love of nature.





# The natural world touches my heart...

For this exercise put a tick in the appropriate box.

1 = You don't like it at all. 5 = You really like it.

	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sky and clouds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flowers, plants and trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wind and air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rocks, crystals and stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Snow and ice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water, oceans and rivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hills and mountains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Night, sky and stars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



# Summary of how you connect

a. Write below all the words that you marked or highlighted in the lists completed so far.

b. Complete these two sentences

I most easily connect with the goodness and wonder of life when I:

Even when I am in a bad or sad mood, doing these things help me connect and feel better:



# Activities you enjoy

Thinking about when and where you most easily connect with the goodness of life. Tick any boxes that apply to you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Animals and pets	<input type="checkbox"/> Completing a task	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	<input type="checkbox"/> In a sacred place
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerts	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking	<input type="checkbox"/> Flowers	<input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the sky
<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for others	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Making music
<input type="checkbox"/> Carpentry	<input type="checkbox"/> Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Gardening	<input type="checkbox"/> Martial arts
<input type="checkbox"/> Celebrating	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving	<input type="checkbox"/> Giving healing	<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation
<input type="checkbox"/> Ceremony	<input type="checkbox"/> Drumming	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchildren	<input type="checkbox"/> Ocean and sea
<input type="checkbox"/> Chanting	<input type="checkbox"/> Eating	<input type="checkbox"/> Helping others	<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting
<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertaining	<input type="checkbox"/> Hills and mountains	<input type="checkbox"/> People watching
<input type="checkbox"/> Climbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/> Pampering
<input type="checkbox"/> Cloud watching	<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring	<input type="checkbox"/> Humour	<input type="checkbox"/> Perfumes/colognes



# Activities you enjoy continued...

Tick any boxes that apply to you, or create your own.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Painting	<input type="checkbox"/>	River/stream/lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tea and coffee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yoga
<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing games	<input type="checkbox"/>	Running	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poetry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Travelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pottery	<input type="checkbox"/>	Song	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre/plays	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time with family	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sport	<input type="checkbox"/>	Touch	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Riding	<input type="checkbox"/>	Surfing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Risk taking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ritual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	With a loved one	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cloud watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working on a project	<input type="checkbox"/>	



# Your personality

People also have different ways of looking after their wellbeing, depending on their personality. Some people prefer communal settings (like a choir), others enjoy time alone. Some people prefer being active (running or dancing). Others prefer to read or be quiet. Tick any style that might apply to you, or write your own.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Experimental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Methodical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sociable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adventurous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extrovert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Philosophical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Studious
<input type="checkbox"/>	Calm	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wild
<input type="checkbox"/>	Careful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intellectual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Practical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thoughtful
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chaotic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Introvert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Passionate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traditional
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joyful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reclusive	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reserved	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Devotional	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disciplined	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Earnest	<input type="checkbox"/>	Musical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Simple	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meditative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Solitary	<input type="checkbox"/>	



# Summary of your activities and personality

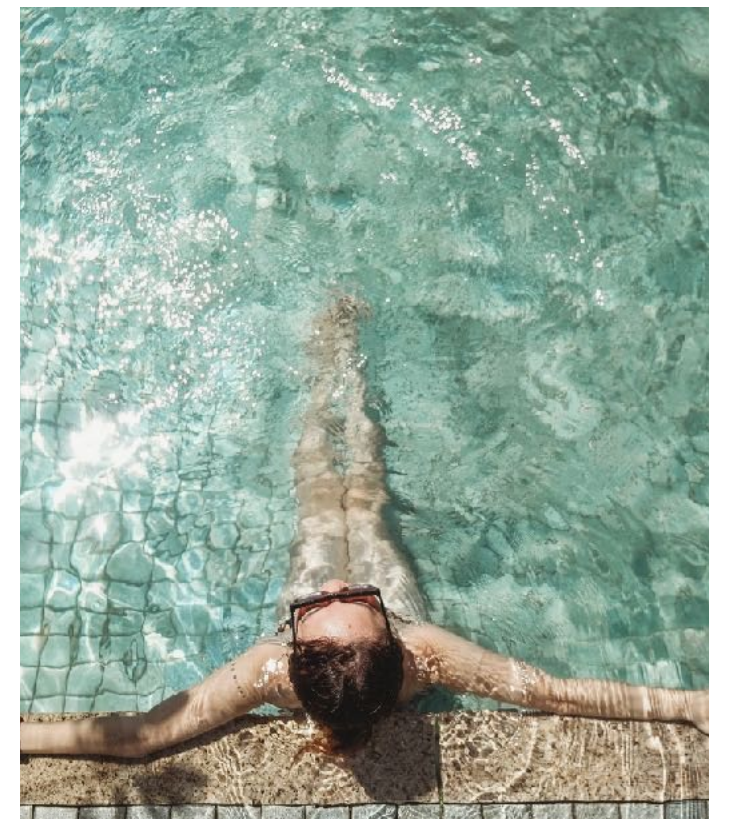
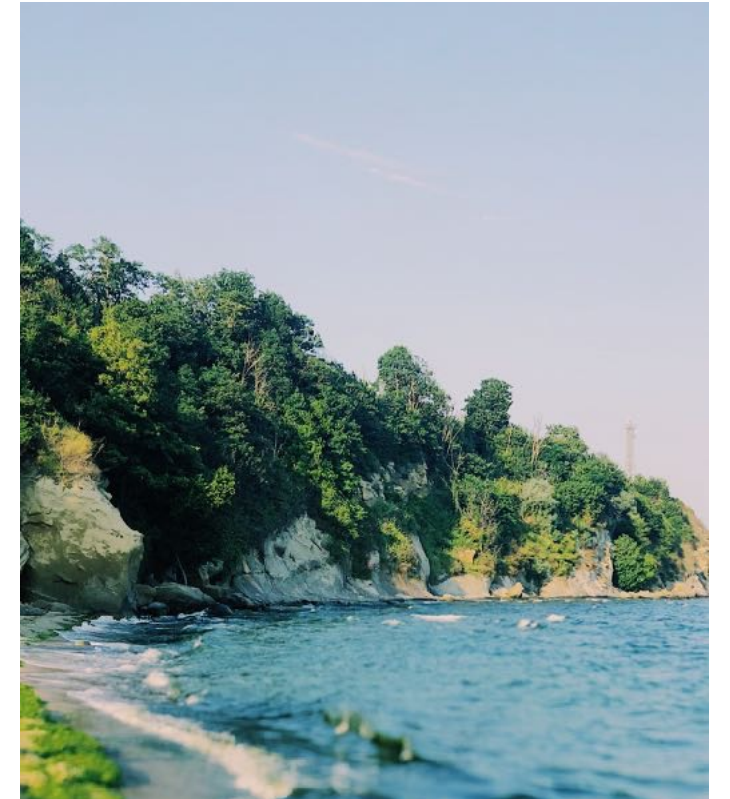
a. Write below all the activities and personality styles that you marked in the lists above.

b. Complete these two sentences

The activities I enjoy the most are:

Even when I am in a bad or sad mood, doing these activities helps me feel better:







# Exercise and movement

Many people find exercise and movement are good ways to connect. It's something you can do alone, or as a family. If movement is difficult for you, is there anything you would like to put in 'other ways' at the end instead? Or you can just move to the next section.

Tick the ones that you enjoy.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Tai Chi	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Pilates	<input type="checkbox"/> Dance
<input type="checkbox"/> Running	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/> Martial arts	<input type="checkbox"/> Gym
<input type="checkbox"/> Other – please describe:	





## 2. Your Wellbeing Plan

Now we can begin to formulate a plan to put yourself into the situations and settings that support your wellbeing. In the previous section you listed and named all the things that help you connect.

What appeals to you most?

What would you like to do on a regular basis?

Take a few quiet minutes.

Think about...

- How you most easily experience a good connection to life.
- Which of them would be easier for you to repeat regularly and often?
- When and where would it be most easy for you to do them?



# Daily connection

## Daily

What would you like to do on a daily basis to connect?

When? Where?

For how long?

## Top-ups

There are special circumstances in which you feel *really* connected, which need planning and scheduling. These are your top-ups! They are extra things you can do, places you can visit and people you can see, from time to time.

What could be your top-ups?

When? Where?

For how long?



# ‘Soaking’ in the experience

To get the full physical and emotional benefits of being connected, you have to let them anchor in your body. You have to ‘soak’ in the experience and *feel* it. This is exactly the same as when you let yourself relax in a warm bath. You can get in and out of a bath quickly – or you can choose to stay in longer. If you stay in longer you can feel your muscles giving way to the enjoyable sensations of the warm water. You soak in it. To make the most of your connections to the good things in life, let them in. Soak.

*Don’t just notice the flowers. Stop and smell them.*

So, when you are experiencing a sense of connection, be aware.

Pause.

Notice the good feeling.

Relax. Take a few soft, long breaths. Sink down into yourself. Give in to the feeling (like a warm bath).

Let it settle down into your whole body.





# ‘Soaking’ - the short version 🏠

Pause.

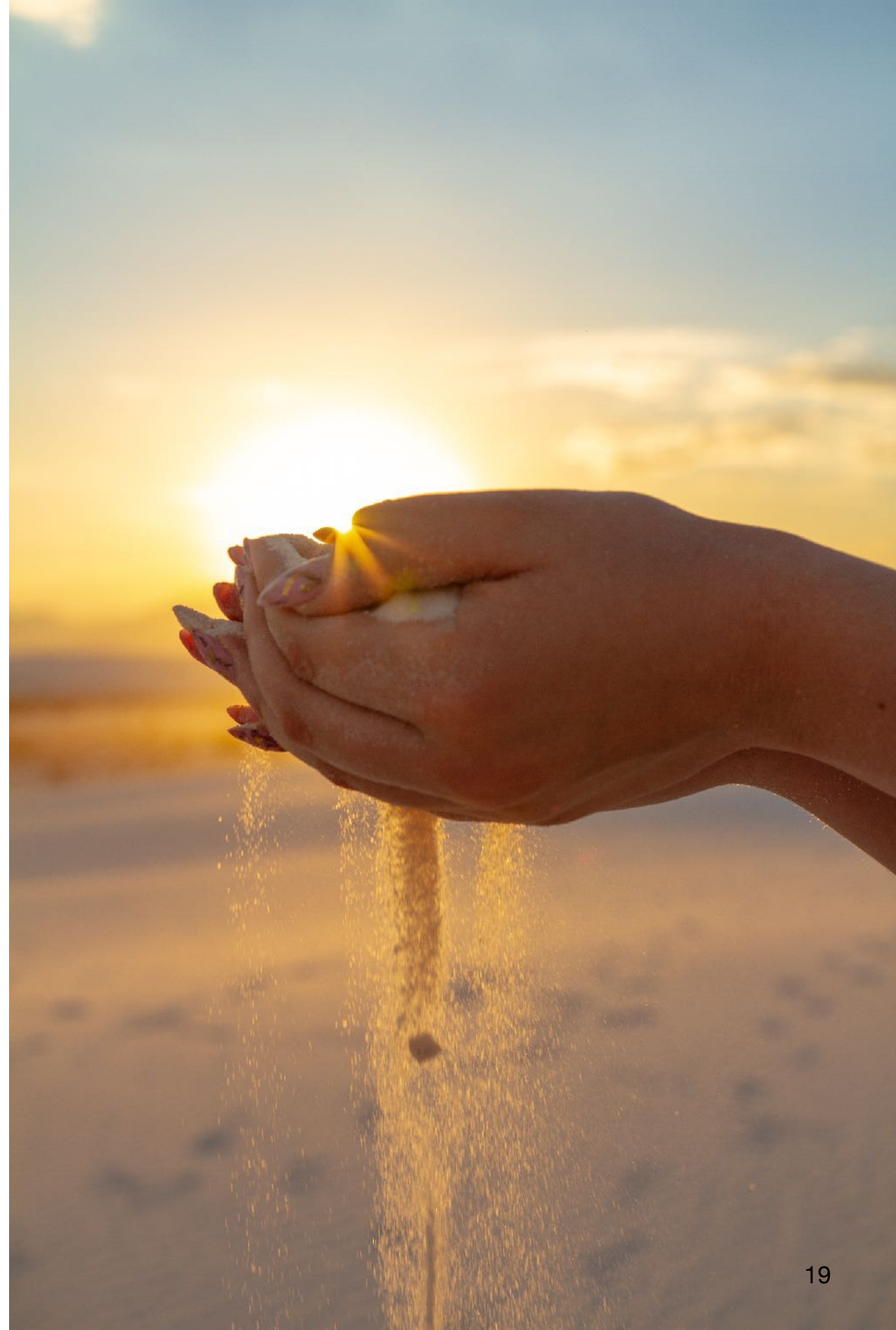
Notice you feel connected.

Allow your body, especially your stomach, to sink and drop down.

Take three soft, calm, quiet breaths.

Allow the good feeling to be absorbed by your body – just like relaxing in a warm bath.

Enjoy it fully.





# Soaking - the ten minute version

Put aside ten minutes to be quiet. You can do this in bed or sitting in your favourite chair.

Remember that your body already knows how to be at ease and relaxed. It has, for example, been doing it for decades when you sleep or relax.

Perhaps after a good meal. Perhaps on holiday. Sitting in your favourite café. Looking out across a beautiful view. On a park bench. After exercise and movement.

In those situations you are just physically comfortable and content. Sinking into yourself and calm.

Right now allow yourself to sink into those same sensations.

Let your stomach sink and relax. Lower your chin slightly.

Lower your eyes slightly as if looking down to the ground.

Notice the sensations on the soles of your feet.

Notice the sensations of your clothes on your thighs and your bottom.

Take three very slow, very quiet, very soft and calm breaths down into your abdomen.

Allow yourself to drop and sink fully down into yourself. Just like sitting in your favourite chair or sofa, park bench or beach.

Bring into your mind one of those times where you feel connected.

You can feel exactly the same now.

Stay relaxed. Stay at ease. Allow yourself to feel connected. Let it fully in. Absorb it. Soak in it.



# 3. Peace of mind

How best can you manage life's ups and downs and achieve peace of mind? Your life is a journey towards greater love, wisdom and connection.

Every situation – good or bad – is an opportunity to learn and grow.

Single parents meet challenges every day. You can help yourself to overcome difficulties by building resilience and using mindfulness.

**Resilience** is the ability to live and develop in a positive way and maintain personal wellbeing in the face of challenge.

**Mindfulness** is something you can learn which involves making a special effort to notice what's happening in the present moment - in your mind, body and surroundings - without judging anything. It has roots in Buddhism and meditation, but you don't have to be spiritual or have any particular beliefs, to try it.

A key part of mindfulness is *the psychological ability to detach, witness yourself and self-manage with care, wisdom and compassion.*

Let's take a closer look at witnessing yourself...







# Witnessing yourself

Stepping back and separating from yourself, or 'witnessing' yourself, is a normal human activity. It happens to all of us sometimes. It's just like watching television or sitting in a café watching the world go by. Except here you are watching and thinking about *yourself*.

When have you stepped back and found yourself thinking about yourself or looking at yourself in a detached way?

If you haven't done it before, take a few moments to think about it now.

# Witnessing yourself continued...

When have you stepped back and found yourself thinking about yourself or looking at yourself in a detached way?

Tick any boxes that apply to you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Meditating	<input type="checkbox"/> At a social event	<input type="checkbox"/> At a social event
<input type="checkbox"/> Needing a change in career	<input type="checkbox"/> Bored	<input type="checkbox"/> Lying in bed
<input type="checkbox"/> Need a change of relationship	<input type="checkbox"/> Drunk or on drugs	<input type="checkbox"/> Daydreaming
<input type="checkbox"/> On holiday	<input type="checkbox"/> During a boring activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Anything else? Please describe:
<input type="checkbox"/> Out of work	<input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted	
<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/> Having achieved a success	
<input type="checkbox"/> Working too hard	<input type="checkbox"/> Ill or in pain	



# Self-manage kindly

If you do step back and witness yourself, it is important to look at yourself with an attitude of kindness. If you think about yourself with a judgmental or critical attitude it is like having an angry critical person punishing you inside your head.

This internal punisher triggers electro-chemical changes in your brain and nervous system, and produces hormones of anxiety and stress.

But if you witness yourself with an attitude of kindness and care, it triggers a cocktail of wellbeing hormones. It can make dealing with the things you are reflecting on easier.

So, have you ever thought: I need to change my behaviour and attitude?      Yes      No

If Yes, describe the circumstances:





# Audit the previous 24 hours 🏠

Here you are developing your ability to step back and observe yourself as a 'kind witness'.

Sit quietly.

You are going to look back at the previous twenty-four hours. Hour by hour recall what you did and with whom.

Ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- Were you kind?
- Were you aware of what others needed?
- What mood were you in? How did you feel?
- What might you have done better?
- What was going on for you?
- What did you do well?
- What do you need to improve? – more rest, self- discipline, time alone, exercise, better diet, asking for help etc?
- If you were in distress, ill or challenged, what did you learn from those circumstances?

Day by day, review yourself and your life.







## 4. Your Kind Witness

*Your Kind Witness is willing to learn more about who you really are and the nature of your character and psychology*

*Compassionately looks at everything you are, seeking to understand and heal all parts of yourself*

*Is mature and takes responsibility*

*Guides you in your next steps and development*





*Your Kind Witness is you at your most intelligent, wise and compassionate.*

*It develops new connections in your brain.*

*It sends health-giving messages through your body.*

*Your Kind Witness can be your best friend.*



# Mindfulness self-audit

With your kind witness, rate how often you are able to act mindfully towards yourself and others in difficult times?

1 = I rarely or never do this      10 = I do this on a daily basis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I use my breath to calm myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compassionately witness what is happening around me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I detach and compassionately witness my moods, thoughts and behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I mindfully manage my feelings and emotions with compassion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regularly reflect on my behaviour and attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ground myself and stay calm in crises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of how my mood and presence can influence other people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I respect and am sensitive to other people’s space and boundaries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to calm myself when someone else is in distress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know when to stay quiet and just listen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of my body language, facial expression and eye contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I guide my difficult emotions towards patience and kindness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I aim to be a presence that is reassuring and healing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Meditation

Maybe you are a meditator . . . but don't know it

Meditation is a natural human behaviour. It was not invented by a particular religion and it is not complicated. Its essence is very simple:

Body at ease

Mind watchful

Calm and quiet

You stay in that state for a while

Maybe you do all of the above but have never recognised that it is meditation. We all have an instinct to be quiet and alone and to ponder on our lives. This is a very natural and normal behaviour. Meditation is good for our physical and mental health. It is helpful for all of us to have times of quiet watchfulness.

Throughout *Your Wellbeing Programme* you have been taking moments of quiet and being at ease. For some this may have been easy. For others it may have required more focus and self-management.





# The inner smile meditation

**In this exercise you use the caring attitude you might have towards a vulnerable child or small animal. You direct this kind and caring attitude down into your own body. It has a wonderful effect of reducing tension and improving your mood.**

*Find somewhere comfortable and quiet.*

*Be patient.*

*Allow your body to drop down into being at ease. Let your stomach and abdomen drop and sink. Take three soft quiet breaths.*

*As best you can...*

*Open your heart and feel some gentle love. Soften your eyes.*

*Now turn your focus down into your own body.*

*In the same way that you might lean down and care for an injured child, or cradle an injured bird in your cupped hands, you direct this same quality of kind care down into your own body.*

*Have a kind and loving attitude to your own body.*

*Notice any feelings of distress, tension or pain.*

*Be accepting, tolerant and kind towards it. Hold and cradle it.*

## Inner smile and cauldron

Do the inner smile meditation, then add:

Envisage your body as being like a large pot, or cauldron, or chalice.

Your inner smile fills the container with benevolence.

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## Inner smile and the tree of life

Do the inner smile meditation, then add:

Envisage your body as being like a tree with a strong trunk and deep roots.

Your inner smile is like the sun feeding the tree with light and warmth.



## Self-healing meditation 🎧

*Take a few minutes to calm.*

*Guide your attitude into that of the inner smile, focusing with kindness and care on your own body and feelings.*

*Notice anything that might be causing you distress.*

*Keep it at a mental distance and look at it with kindness.*

*Keep your breath soft.*

*The longer you can just look at your distress with kindness, the more the distress will slowly go down.*

*When you have had enough just let your focus go and think about someone, or some place, or some thing that you really love.*

This exercise is not a magic remedy that will immediately change things. But practised regularly it can really help to make things better.



**Take care of  
yourself first...**



A full-page background image showing a wide beach at sunset. The sky is filled with large, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and blue. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow. In the distance, a coastal town with many buildings is visible along the shoreline. The beach is sandy and has some people walking on it. The ocean waves are gentle and white-capped.

# Meditation

Do you think meditation might be a good practice for you?

When could you take ten to twenty minutes just to sit quietly and be at ease?

Where might you do it?

When you are quiet, calm and watchful you can choose to use one of these meditation practices:

Inner Smile

Self-healing

Mindful and compassionate self-audits

Soaking

Thinking good thoughts about others

Patience

Breathe softly when you feel irritated  
or want to get up.



# 5. Care and Compassion

From childhood many people have a quiet knowing that being a good person and caring for others makes the world a better place.

There is also a hidden benefit for all of us. Caring for others and being kind are good too for our own health. When we care for others our body chemistry adapts and softens in a way that is beneficial. It is nature's way of rewarding us for being kind. Caring for others also brings the emotional and psychological benefits of integrity, meaning and self-respect. And it builds community.

We are led by our values. Let's take a look at this next.





# Your values

It is always helpful to name your highest values. Tick each value or ethic that you feel is important. (Or write your own)

<input type="checkbox"/> Apology	<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighbourliness
<input type="checkbox"/> Balance	<input type="checkbox"/> Equality	<input type="checkbox"/> Honour	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-violence
<input type="checkbox"/> Bravery	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> Hope	<input type="checkbox"/> Order
<input type="checkbox"/> Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith	<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Peace
<input type="checkbox"/> Charity	<input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Joy	<input type="checkbox"/> Reliability
<input type="checkbox"/> Chivalry	<input type="checkbox"/> Freedom	<input type="checkbox"/> Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Respect
<input type="checkbox"/> Community	<input type="checkbox"/> Generosity	<input type="checkbox"/> Kindness	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Courage	<input type="checkbox"/> Goodwill	<input type="checkbox"/> Love	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerance
<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/> Grace	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderation	<input type="checkbox"/> Truth
<input type="checkbox"/> Democracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Green	<input type="checkbox"/> Modesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/> Harmlessness	<input type="checkbox"/> Nature	<input type="checkbox"/>



# Your values continued...

Using the words that you have ticked and written above, complete these sentences.

My highest values are . . .

I believe in them and they guide my life.





## ***The body language of care***

People who care are the heart of a humane and compassionate world. It is a basic instinct to care for the vulnerable. You can see this instinct at work in parents with their children, or when children look after small animals. We all present the same caring body language to somebody who is in need.

- *We turn our whole body towards the person we're caring for.*
- *We lean in towards them, shoulders down.*
- *Our body language is harmless and reassuring.*
- *Our breath calms.*
- *Our eyes soften and we look directly at them.*
- *Our faces are calm – but also alert and attentive.*
- *If appropriate, we may give a reassuring touch.*
- *We are careful about what we say. Silence is golden.*

This is the universal body language of care and compassion. It includes ways of behaving that support your own physical health: body at ease, calm breath, relaxed facial expression, soft eyes. To be cared for is good for everyone.



# Compassion for others

*My heart has opened and I have felt kindness and compassion when caring for someone in distress...*

☐ A child

☐ An animal

☐ A friend

☐ A family member

☐ A stranger

☐ Anyone else:







## ***Deeper compassion***

I can see the good in someone even when they are acting badly

I can see the distressed inner child in someone even when they are angry and aggressive

I can forgive even when I still feel aggrieved

I can be patient and kind even when my timetable is stressed

I have been inspired by other people's compassion and generosity of spirit

Other – please describe:



## ***Kind thoughts about others*** 🏠

Finally, kind thoughts, meditations and prayers for others are also good for your own health.

Research has shown that negative thinking is damaging to your physical and mental health. But thinking kindly about others soothes your own nervous system.

More than that, all traditions across the world teach that kind thoughts and kind prayers have a good effect on others. Many people take time every day to meditate and pray for family, friends, colleagues and anyone in the world who needs help.

Be at ease.

Connect with the goodness of life.

Allow yourself to fully feel it.

Spend a while thinking kind thoughts about others. Wish them well.

Wish them health and happiness.





# 6. Your summary

On this page describe how you now self-manage your health and wellbeing.

## **Connection**

What do you do on a daily basis to connect?

## **Your Wellbeing Plan**

What's in your wellbeing plan?

## **Peace of Mind**

When do you pause and give mindful care to yourself?

## **Your Kind Witness**

How are you taking time to look kindly at yourself?

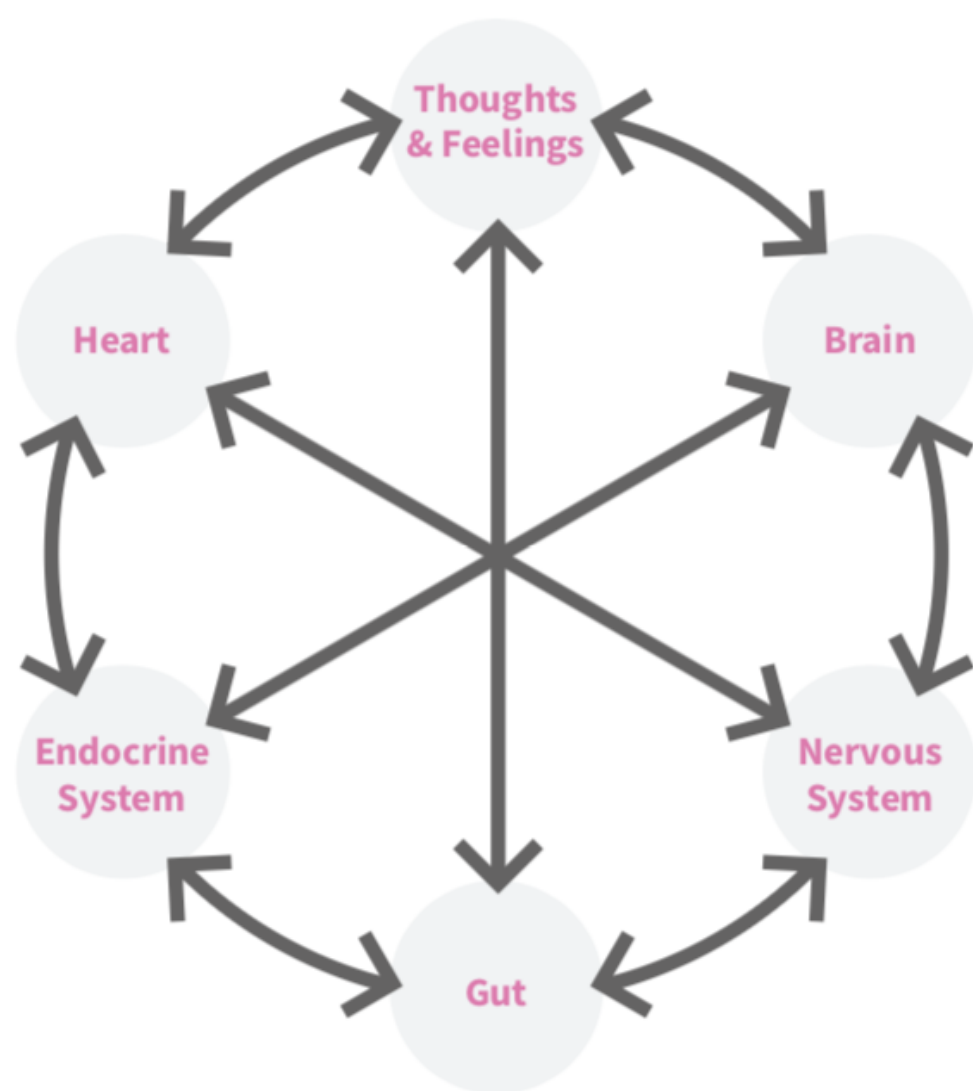
## **Care and Compassion**

How do you give care and compassion to others?



# Mind-body connection

Your Wellbeing Programme can improve and boost your physical, emotional and psychological health. It can reduce stress and anxiety, and bring your body back into a state of healthy balance. It achieves this because your mind, your emotions and mood, and your physical body are all closely connected.



## Physical benefits of Your Wellbeing Programme

Brain	<i>Calms the brain</i>
Nervous system	<i>Reduces tension, enables relaxation</i>
Endocrine system	<i>Triggers a cocktail of wellbeing hormones</i>
Heart	<i>Enables heart rate integration (HRV) and calm breath</i>
Gut	<i>Lowers acidity, harmonises gut eco-system</i>
Immune System	<i>General health supported and boosted</i>
All this lowers the risk of illness and supports healing and recovery.	

## Psychological benefits of Your Wellbeing Programme

Confidence	<i>You feel more in control and self-managing</i>
Meaning	<i>Life has more meaning and purpose</i>
Happiness	<i>Increases hope and positive emotions</i>
Strength	<i>Calmer, more centred</i>
People	<i>Improved communication skills, better relationships</i>
Connection	<i>Greater sense of community, less isolation</i>

If you haven't yet experienced all of these benefits, keep using the programme and you will get there.

# Science and evidence

People often ask whether there is evidence for all these claims. There certainly is. Recently, there has been a growing body of evidence on the health benefits of being kind, and also the health benefits of mindfulness and meditation.

Kindness UK is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with the goal of making kindness a greater part of everyone's daily lives and increasing the awareness of the positive benefits of kindness to health and the overall wellbeing of society. They have compiled tons of global research on the health benefits of kindness and compassion: <http://kindnessuk.com/research.php>

Harvard Medical School recently published a help guide outlining the health benefits of mindfulness.

<https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>

[MIND is an organisation that has lots of useful information and tips on mindfulness https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/mindfulness-exercises-tips/](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/mindfulness-exercises-tips/)

Mindfulness is an academic journal that documents the latest findings and best practice for mindfulness.

<https://www.springer.com/journal/12671>



# What's next?

If you have enjoyed this programme, you might want to explore other opportunities to improve your health and wellbeing. Or you might want to support someone else who may be struggling and introduce them to some of the ideas and skills you discovered in the *Your Wellbeing Programme*.

If you have any comments about the programme, suggestions for improvements, or would like to get involved in supporting others, please contact:

Gayle Baker, Peer Support Administrator at [gayle.baker@gingerbread.org.uk](mailto:gayle.baker@gingerbread.org.uk)

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For more information about the Trust visit [www.spiritualcompanions.org](http://www.spiritualcompanions.org)

