

Good Vibrations

Welcome to Age NI's Good Vibrations. It's March and we are cautiously hopeful. We're beginning to think about emerging and reconnecting after this long hibernation. The Take Five steps to wellbeing are a great starting point for taking care of ourselves and can help us to be ready to look forward.

This has been a really tough year and many of us have been touched by loss. Our back page has lots of useful sources of advice and support if you have been bereaved – please get in touch. Inside, you'll find ways to connect your memories and tell your story, tips

on finding contentment and things to learn and do from home. Spring is coming: we're focusing on moving more, feeling strong and reconnecting.


Linda Robinson,
Chief Executive, Age NI


Olive MacLeod,
Chief Executive, Public Health Agency

Staying Connected



with Stephen Watson

BBC Sports Presenter Stephen Watson had a kidney transplant just before the first lockdown and while shielding, he has continued his live TV and radio broadcasts from home.

He told us, “The BBC moved quickly to ensure I had all the facilities to allow me to do my job from home. Lockdown has given me time to let my new kidney really settle down, instead of living life at a million miles per hour as usual.

“I find a daily routine is vitally important. I go walking early in the morning, aiming for at least 10,000 steps before getting stuck into work. Having structure to your day really helps and there is no doubt keeping active makes you feel good.

“Obviously, I also enjoy watching as much sport as possible – it doesn't matter what – though I haven't been enjoying watching my beloved Liverpool recently!



“Besides sport, I enjoy music. I am a serial collector of music by 80's band The Smiths and their lead singer Morrissey, and, at the risk of sounding like a nerd, I've just completed my cassette collection (bar one), which was very satisfying. As a complete contrast, I have also discovered The Crown on Netflix!

“I have been supporting Age NI in keeping connected with a few older people who I phone and text regularly. I enjoy our weekly chats, and hopefully it's helping them through these difficult times too. I consider them all good friends now.

“Thinking beyond lockdown, I'm looking forward to socialising properly with friends and family. I know I'm not alone in dreaming of watching a football or rugby game with a full house and the roar of a crowd. Hopefully it won't be long.”

Take5

steps to wellbeing

There are five simple steps to help keep well. Build these into daily life. Think of them as your 'five a day' for feeling good.

Connect



Stay in touch with friends, family and neighbours by phone or video calls.

Be Active



Exercise makes us feel good mentally and physically, keeps bones and muscles strong.

Take Notice



Take a moment to be still and look around you. Focus on things that bring you joy.

Keep Learning



Set yourself a goal, learn a new skill, or take on a new hobby.

Give



Do something nice for someone, volunteer to become a phone befriender – feelgood is real!

Find out how to get a FREE Good Vibrations Tracker
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Connect - Tell Your Story



Dr Geraldine Gallagher is an expert in connecting with older people through memories and life-story-telling. She runs reminiscence workshops using music and images to trigger personal memories: a particularly powerful tool for people with dementia.

Here Dr G (as she is known) shares some tips for storytelling and reminiscing, whether you are an older person yourself, or chatting with a family member or friend. “Reminiscence and life story are closely linked: they allow someone to share memories and experiences. It’s all about starting the conversation and asking the right questions. Reminiscing can help to transport an individual back to a time and a place in their lives. Sharing a memory, such as their first date to the pictures, can trigger another memory and another, like a domino effect. In a small group (you could do this as a

family on Zoom), reminiscence creates a buzz of wellbeing as each person listens and shares their story – it can be a really joyful experience. A good starting point for life story-telling is old photographs, which can help to guide a theme. Find old photos and either talk about them with family or friends, or write down your responses and share them in a letter. Take time to share your story with younger family members, perhaps a tale or two never told before; or imagine the joy of receiving a hand-written life story from an older family member – what a precious gift!”

86 year old Anne Coulter from Ballynahinch has recently started hand-writing a book which includes her own poetry, a recipe for brussel sprouts, book and movie recommendations (she’s a fan of Shirley Valentine), tales of her rescued stray cat, Wesley, a memory of meeting the Duke of Edinburgh in the 1950’s and a story of a lucky escape from a man who couldn’t get a word in edgewise! Here is one of Anne’s own poems.

Bubble Gum - Ballyholme, Bangor



*I drew the short straw.
It was now up to me.
We had spotted him
walking alone by
the sea
The other three hid
behind a wall
(in 1943 I wasn't
very tall!)
The magic words were
“Any gum, chum?”*

*My legs were shaking.
I chewed my thumb.
Had we found an
American soldier with
bubble gum?
We had never had it.
We wanted some.
He stopped walking.
He looked down at me.
I was well aware
the others could see.*

*He didn't have gum;
he gave me biscuits
instead.
He asked would
I like them.
I nodded my head.
We ate the biscuits
while sitting on the wall.
The fact it wasn't gum
didn't matter at all.*

Here are some sample topics and questions:

- School days**
 - Who was your best friend?
 - What was your favourite/hated subject in school?
 - What did you bring for lunch?
- Teenage years**
 - Did you have a part-time job?
 - Did you get pocket money?
 - What did you do for fun?
- Work**
 - What was your first job?
 - What was your first wage?
- Marriage**
 - What did you wear?
 - How much was your outfit?
 - Did you have a wedding breakfast or a hotel do?
- Family**
 - Did you have a cot/bedroom for the baby?
 - What was your pram like?
- Travel**
 - How many countries have you visited?
 - Where is your favourite place to visit?
 - Have you had any travel disasters?

Census 2021 is almost here

The census only happens every 10 years and the next one is happening in March 2021. For info and contact details visit census.gov.uk/ni

Take Notice with Frank



Frank Liddy is Inspire Wellbeing’s lead Mindfulness Practitioner and has worked in mental health for over 25 years. The founder of the Belfast Mindfulness Centre is our go-to guy to learn more about the practice. He is delivering a series of eight free online mindfulness workshops via the Age NI Facebook page and YouTube Channel. www.youtube.com/user/agenitv

If you’re new to mindfulness (or even a little sceptical), here we ask Frank some beginners’ questions – what is it, who’s it for and what are the benefits?

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way to shift ourselves to live in the moment, to make us calmer, more fearless, more caring, or as some say, “to be present” in the here and now. It is associated with positive emotions like joy, relaxation and contentment.

When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future, which can leave us feeling unhappy or anxious and unfulfilled. I believe that what people seek most in life: happiness, purpose and fulfilment,

is hidden by a multitude of distracting thoughts which distort our perceptions. When we learn to “bring the mind home,” we can focus on and appreciate what is already there.

Mindfulness meditation involves paying attention to thoughts, sounds, the sensations of breathing, to each of your senses, bringing your attention back to a place of stillness whenever the mind starts to wander.

What are the benefits?

Mindfulness is incredibly calming, bringing clarity, focus and contentment. I call it the art of falling-awake: it’s a form of focused relaxation - and so much more.

Research has shown that mindfulness helps to reduce anxiety and depression. It teaches us how to respond to stress with awareness of what is happening in the present moment, rather than responding to some of those noisy (but completely unconnected) brain distractions which can leave us constantly feeling angry, stressed or anxious.

Who is this for?

Mindfulness practice is for anyone and everyone. Life is fast, noisy and full of distractions. For some

it brings life-altering lightness or relief from anxiety or low mood; and for others, it can become an everyday stress-buster to switch off temporarily or “unplug” from work, technology or caring responsibilities.

How do I become mindful?

The simplest way to begin is to focus on your breath. This happens automatically, it gives us air to live and yet we don’t think about it. Stop what you’re doing and simply Take a Breath. Notice the sensation of your breath, how your belly, your chest, your nose, mouth or jaw feels at every stage as you inhale, pause and exhale again. Enjoy the sensation of filling up your body and expelling air away. Noticing your breath is an amazing way to calm your mind.

“ I am an old cynic, but I must admit, meditation has got my worrying under control and I find it so calming. The surprise is I really enjoy it now.

Derek 76, Dungiven.



FREE Good Vibrations Tracker

It’s easy to adopt the Take Five steps to wellbeing at home. If you’d like to be part of our Good Vibrations community, to receive ideas and inspiration to keep well, sign up to our mailing list at www.ageni.org/GVCommunity. Or if you’d like to receive one of our **free Good Vibrations tracker booklets** visit www.ageni.org/freetracker or call 028 90 245729.



Bereavement Support



Brenda Kearns, Head of Age NI's Advice Line service explains that the practical impacts of a bereavement are often the first thing people seek help on.



She said, "When you've been bereaved, it can be so hard to know where to turn. Often, it is completely uncharted territory, so not only are you coping with grief, you are suddenly facing urgent practical issues too. It can be very stressful.

While there is no 'typical' situation, we find that many people have financial worries. For example, how to manage household bills without a partner's pension. Our experienced team can provide practical and reassuring information and advice to help get you through this, such as finding out if there are benefits you are entitled to.

If I could share one piece of advice, it would be to make a will; make your wishes clear and organise your finances – it makes things so much easier for those left behind, at such a distressing time.

There are lots of practical and emotional supports out there in every corner of Northern Ireland – get in touch with our Advice Line on 0808 808 7575 or your local services listed here – no one should feel they have no one."

Have Your Say in a safer better future

In the first COVID-19 lockdown, Age NI listened to and captured the views of older people on their experiences, concerns and fears.

As we look to life ahead, we want to hear from older people about what's important to them now, and their priorities for a safer, better future.

You can access the Lived Experience 2021 survey here: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/livedexpvgv or email eithne.gilligan@ageni.org to have a copy emailed or posted to you.

This is a really important opportunity, as Age NI is planning a Pensioners' Parliament in 2021, which will reflect the priorities and big issues raised.

Go ahead and have your say!

Local Contacts

Each Health and Social Care Trust has a Bereavement Coordinator who can provide information and signpost you to support in your local area.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Heather Russell, Trust Bereavement Coordinator
Email: heather.russell@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Tel: 028 9615 5473

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Gwyneth Woods, Trust Bereavement Coordinator
Gwyneth.Woods@northerntrust.hscni.net
Tel: 028 9442 4992

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Paul McCloskey, Trust Bereavement Coordinator
paul.mccloskey@setrust.hscni.net
Tel: 028 9055 3282 15

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Sharon McCloskey, Trust Bereavement Coordinator
sharon.mccloskey@southerntrust.hscni.net
Tel: 028 3756 0085

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Carole McKeeman, Trust Bereavement Coordinator
Carole.McKeeman@westerntrust.hscni.net
Tel: 028 7134 5171
Text: 214184

You can also access bereavement support by telephone or online:

Cruse Bereavement Care

Provides free support, advice and information for adults, children and young people.
National Freephone Helpline: 0808 808 1677

GriefChat

(www.griefchat.co.uk)

is a safe online space where people can share their story, explore their feelings and be supported by a qualified bereavement counsellor. The free service is open Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm

You can find details of local support organisations at www.mindingyourhead.info

in the "Services" section.

Anyone who is in crisis and experiencing distress or despair can call the Northern Ireland crisis response helpline, Lifeline, on 0808 808 8000.