



Five ways to good mental wellbeing & Buddhism

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.

One Connect with other people



Good mental wellbeing comes from the good feeling we receive from our good interactions with others. Cultivating mindfulness, and other qualities of wholesome mental states, can be developed through practicing mindfulness and meditation with others.

Relationships are important for your mental wellbeing as they can help you see that:

- Others too are struggling
- Others too are walking on a spiritual path
- Spiritual practices, like the cultivation of loving kindness, can build one's own wellbeing as well as one being more open to others
- Spiritual practices may not be constrained by sharp boundaries and artificial division

The third jewel of Buddhism is the *sangha*: **the community of people walking on the spiritual path. Buddhists take refuge in the sangha.**

The meditation practice of cultivating *Metta*:

Goodwill, along with caring for others, are spiritual practice. The heart that opens is the heart that belongs, always at home and with no boundaries.

Two

Be physically active



“Knowing that this body is like a pot, fortifying the mind like a city. You should fight Māra* with the weapon of wisdom. You should guard your territory without resting.”

DHAMMAPADA V 40

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

- Try being mindful of the body whenever you remember
- Pay attention to sensations in different areas as the attention is scanning through the body
- Being more mindful of the body enables a more grounded sense of wellbeing to develop
- A balanced approach to cultivating wellbeing may come from approaches to caring for body, heart and mind – and caring for all three together

There are many ways to be physically active: Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong as well as outdoor activity like gardening, indoor activity like dancing – and throwing oneself wholeheartedly into anything you do.

Māra* - an embodiment of unwholesome mental states

Three Learn something new each day



Learning new skills can improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Engaging with new experience to bring freshness and overcome staleness
- Boosting confidence, raising esteem and reducing depression and helping you to gain a sense of purpose
- Practice attention to body, heart and mind
- Be curious, explore and be creative

Why not learn more about Buddhism?

For a list of [free courses on Buddhism from top universities](#)

And why not learn to [read the early text in the original languages](#) (e.g. Pali/Sanskrit)?

Story of the Two Wolves

Read the story slowly to yourself, note which words / phrases stand out

A grandparent was teaching his grandchild about life.

'A fight is going on inside me' they told the young person, 'a fight between two wolves.

The dark wolf is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The light wolf is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, truth, compassion and truth.

The same fight is going on in you grandchild and in every other person on the face of this earth'

The grandchild ponders this for a moment and then asked 'which wolf will win?'

The grandparent smiled and simply said ' the one you feed'.

Four

Giving to others



“Each one of us is responsible for all of humankind. We need to think of each other as true sisters and brothers, we must seek to lessen the suffering of others. Rather than working solely to acquire wealth, we need to do something meaningful, something seriously directed towards humanity as a whole”.

HH DALAI LAMA

Acts of giving and kindness are 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

People who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. From small acts of kindness to more regular giving, such as volunteering, we should strive to show compassion to everyone.

Five Pay attention to the present moment



“That mind never stops manifesting all forms, countless, inconceivably many, unknown to one another. Just as a painter can’t know his own mind, yet paints due to the mind, so is the nature of all things”

THICH NHAT HAHN

Being in the moment and being aware of your thoughts, your feelings, your body and the world around you can improve your mental wellbeing. Often called ‘mindfulness’, this can help you to understand yourself better, change the way you approach challenges and enjoy life more.

You could start by:

- Noticing how often your attention wanders from the present; how often it is drawn back into going over past actions or worrying about future events that haven’t happened
- That every effort to bring the attention back into the moment develops a sense of greater inner strength
- Developing calm states of mind and body in the present moment
- See how calming the mind and body may lead to clearer seeing and understanding

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 these suggestions or the resources on Good Thinking are not helpful for you, try talking to your GP about what else may be more helpful for you.

For more information visit www.good-thinking.uk



This text has been adapted by Keith Munnings and Mariano Marcigaglia, with endorsement from the Network of Buddhist Organisations and The Buddhist Society.