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## Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about living in the present moment and being more aware of your thoughts feelings and using all your senses. So much of our lives is spent worrying about past events and what is to come. By learning to take time out to relax your muscles and control your breathing life may become much more enjoyable and you will learn to approach life in new positive ways. Appreciating everything in your life is the key to happiness and having a good quality of life. Practices such as Yoga and meditation have been around for 1,000s of years originating in Asia, Buddhism in particular. Today Mindfulness is recommended by National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) as a treatment to successfully manage stress, anxiety and depression therefore improving mental health and wellbeing. On the No Panic website you can learn deep muscular relaxation. ([www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)) This technique needs a lot of practice to get the best results and is often used alongside Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to help reduce the occurrence of panic attacks. There is a crisis breathing exercise which you can listen to any time; tel 01952 680835. No Panic also has a helpline open daily from 10am 10pm; 0844 967 4848. There is also a muscle relaxation CD on sale which costs £11.00.

Another useful website is [www.stepsforstress.org](http://www.stepsforstress.org) It is a source of information on recognising stress and ways of managing stress including handy tips. You can download videos on quick muscle relaxation, a simple breathing technique and also a free “Steps for stress” booklet. You can also order a free relaxation CD and complete a stress quiz. There is a useful beginner’s guide to mindfulness, which explains what mindfulness is and its importance. Mindfulness practice is described and is divided into meditation practice and everyday exercises. Visit [www.selfication.com/health/how-to-practice-mindfulness](http://www.selfication.com/health/how-to-practice-mindfulness) You can enter your email address on the website for your free eBook on the Science of willpower. You can also purchase The Habit Blueprint; “15 Simple Steps to Transform Your Life” and access a list of other recommended Books.

Over the last 40years mindfulness therapies have been developed; Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). Usually these therapies are delivered in 8wk courses. (Check to see if it is available in your area). At [www.Bemindful.com](http://www.Bemindful.com) you can access a mindfulness course which includes elements of MBCT and MBSR. It is not only useful in managing your mental wellbeing but also has a positive effect on your physical health helping with conditions such as heart disease and chronic pain. There is a free introduction for this online course. If you decide it is for you the total cost is £30.00. It is available as a web app for your phone/tablet. You can also take a free stress test. On the website you can also access books, audio and video. This includes a free CD of guided meditations. A recommended book is “Mindfulness; A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world” By Mark Williams & Danny Pelman, 2011.

At [www.Omharmonics.com](http://www.Omharmonics.com) you can sign up for free five day meditation course. This course has been downloaded more than 2.8 million times and is suitable for beginners. This technique uses “Binaural Beats”, which are engineered sounds proven to alter brain wave patterns to produce positive mental effects. You can achieve deep relaxation through the synchronisation of your senses with audible heartbeats and breathing sounds. There is a short video for beginner’s tips on meditation on the website.

You can learn how to meditate at the Kadampa Meditation centre in Glasgow. Lunchtime and evening Classes are available and are suitable for everyone, regardless of your religious belief. You do not need to book weekly classes in advance. Several courses are offered, including a learn to meditate course and more in-depth courses such as Living Lightly and Weekend Island retreats. Visit the website for further details including prices, the events calendar and watch a video about the centre; [www.meditateinScotland.org](http://www.meditateinScotland.org) You can contact the centre on 0141 5733220 with any questions or Email: [Info@meditateinScotland.org](mailto:Info@meditateinScotland.org)

There is a meditation class at Howden Park Centre which runs every Sunday at 11am from 12thFeb – 2<sup>nd</sup> July. It will introduce you to techniques such as breathing exercises and guided imagery and relaxation allowing you to achieve all the health benefits from participating. Each class costs £10.00 and you can pay on the day. For more information and to book contact Lorraine Forsyth; tel 07963 408514. Or Email: [lorraine@lollipoptherapies.com](mailto:lorraine@lollipoptherapies.com)

The Mood gym is a free interactive education program, which was launched in 2004 teaching the principles of CBT which is designed to help cope with stress and treat depression. The course explores the relationship between thoughts and emotions.



It consists of 5 modules and includes dealing with the breakdown of a relationship and teaching relaxation and meditation techniques. By completing two or more of these modules it is proven to successfully reduce the occurrence of depression and anxiety. There is also an interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, a relaxation audio available for download and a workbook and feedback assessment. Visit the website; [www.moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au) This course is not a substitute for consulting a Doctor and receiving a subsequent diagnosis and treatment.

## **Mental Health and Exercise**

Exercise is so important for not just for looking after your physical health but also for your mental health, indeed they are closely linked. If you have a physical condition you may be at risk of developing a mental health problem. It is known that exercise can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and stroke. Obesity is a large problem in the UK which subsequently has increased the risk of other conditions such as type two diabetes. If you are suffering from a mental health problem often you may not eat properly, may drink and smoke more and be overweight (which may be due to the medication). Exercise then becomes much more important for such people in remaining healthy.



In modern societies people are not as active as they were in previous generations. Mostly people now use cars and public transport and engage in activities which involve sitting down for extended periods of time, including computing, reading and watching TV. Daily activities are much less demanding with less manual employment. Research has shown that adults are sedentary as they go through their day for more than 7 hours with the elderly in excess of 10hrs. Complications associated with sedentary behaviour include increased risk of chronic disease and obesity. This must be addressed as well as increasing any exercise which you include in your daily routine.

Keeping active on a daily basis has a known role in the prevention of developing a mental health problem in the first place. Research has shown that regular exercise improved the mood of those taking part with increased enthusiasm and alertness.

Feel good chemicals are released in the brain, i.e. Dopamine and serotonin.

Exercise releases other chemicals which aid brain growth and development.

Physical activity is known to be very effective in relieving stress; being active seems to reduce harmful changes in the brain caused by stress. Exercise is also a protective factor against development of dementia. It is also seen to be most effective in the treatment of mild depression. It is also used alongside medication and/or other psychological therapies for more severe depression. There is no stigma associated with engaging in physical activity (rather than taking medication).

Exercise can also reduce symptoms of anxiety.

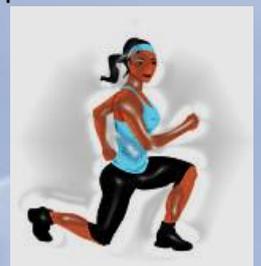
Often there are several reasons you may wish to become more active. If you have a mental illness you may wish to become more mentally healthy or may want to manage your weight more successfully. Simply interacting with other people is good for your mental health and such social benefits can be just as important as any physical benefits you may acquire. Also having the opportunity to be outdoors is also beneficial. Many people do not exercise enough. Adults (aged 19-64 yrs) should aim to be active on a daily basis, with around 2.5hours of moderate activity over a week (30mins, 5x a week).

There are many forms of exercise to consider; any form of exercise is better than nothing and does not need to cost much. You should consider your age and choose an activity that you enjoy so that you stay motivated. Any physical activity you include in your routine should involve both aerobic and strength exercises. Aerobic activities can be at a moderate or vigorous level and your current level of fitness will determine what level you should begin at. You should decide if you would be better choosing a low impact activity such as swimming if you have joint problems. If you have a mental illness a good place to start if you have not exercised for a while is to speak to your GP who can then refer to a local leisure facility if it is decided that you would benefit and can exercise safely. This would mean you can exercise for free for a certain period of time.

You may be surprised at the different types of activity which count as physical exercise. You can begin at a lower level if you need to and build it up gradually into your daily routine. Simply doing the housework, climbing the stairs or carrying the shopping all count. You could also walk home or exercise on your lunch break. You can also incorporate exercise into family/leisure time or as part of your planned exercise activity, for example at the gym, swimming or walking outdoors. Even low intensity sport such as darts/snooker are all good. As is gardening. Examples of muscle strengthening activities include Yoga and lifting weights.

You do not have to exercise alone if this is not for you. You can join a group or go with a friend if you need to. You can set yourself goals which will keep you motivated. It is wise to consider your health before increasing your exercise. If you have a mental health problem you may be very tired much of the time due to lack of sleep or any medication you may be taking. It is therefore wise not to exercise in the morning if you find things difficult at this time. Indeed the medication you are taking may determine what exercise is suitable for you. You may have other problematic times due to side effects of your medication; with antidepressants you may feel dizzy and experience low blood pressure (BP), with antipsychotic medication you may have muscle spasms, feel drowsy or have blurred vision; if you suffer from anxiety and take Beta blockers heart rate & BP are reduced and you will tire more easily. Some medications make the skin more sensitive to sunlight so be aware if you are exercising outdoors. There are other options if the gym is not for you, try walking or swimming. Remember people of all shapes and sizes attend classes. So don't let your size put you off. Consult with your GP/psychiatrist if you need to.

If you would like to know how fit you are you can complete a Fitness self-assessment on the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness) On this website you can access information on getting started with exercise; you can watch the videos online (including aerobic workout videos). There is a learn to run plan for complete beginners; you can download podcasts and follow the audio instructions. Additional advice is given including what to wear/warming up and nutrition. There are strength and flexibility podcasts; exercises for the elderly and find out the many different ways in which people of all ages keep fit. There are also a selection of guides supplied to help you get started with exercise. There is Dancing for fitness/Running tips for beginners/Swimming for fitness/walking for health/cycling for beginners. Xcite leisure centres exist throughout West Lothian. There are 10 venues offering hundreds of fitness classes per week, public swimming, sports and activities for kids. There is supervised soft play with selected classes. Some classes are almost always attended exclusively by women (aqua fit/step) which you may prefer. There are opportunities for stretching and relaxation with Pilates and chilling out in the



sauna/steam room. The venue at Almondvale centre has a new gym layout, with new Technogym equipment; new Omnia 8 and the world's largest Queenax frame thus expanding exercise opportunities for its customers. You can connect with others with social media (Facebook/twitter) to help keep you motivated. You may wish to record your progress using technology such as the free 5K app and podcast which you can access on the NHS website. At the moment there is no joining fee for becoming a member.

Ageing well activities are specifically for the over 50's and are funded by the NHS in partnership with Xcite West Lothian leisure. This project aims to improve both physical health and mental wellbeing of local communities. The timetable is now



available on the website at [www.westlothianleisure.com](http://www.westlothianleisure.com) There are a wide range of activities to try; these include Ballroom & Latin dance (weekly), walking group- with trained leaders; Tai Chi- for strength/flexibility (suitable for beginners), weekly line dancing and buddy swimming opportunities . For more information contact Avril on 01506 237950 or 077680950. Or

Email: [aclerkson@westlothianleisure.com](mailto:aclerkson@westlothianleisure.com)

You may wish to pay less and try out a local budget price gym, such as PureGym. At the moment the memberships start at only £8.99 per month, there is no joining fee and no contract. Day passes are from £6.99 and the gym is open 24/7. There are over 220 pieces of high quality equipment and there are over 50 free classes available every week. The gym is situated centrally in Livingston in Almondvale Business Park (behind Toni Macaroni). For any queries you can contact the Member Services Team on 0344 477 0005 which is open 7days a week from 8am-10pm. Visit the website at [www.puregym.com](http://www.puregym.com) or Email: [member.services@puregym.com](mailto:member.services@puregym.com)

If you feel uncomfortable attending activities there are other opportunities specifically for people with mental health issues. These include walking and relaxation at Bathgate House. The Brock garden centre which operates as a social enterprise is based at Strathbrock and offers gardening opportunities all year round.

The ramblers association has a Livingston group which was formed in 1980 and is a registered charity. They offer a range of walks of varying difficulty- visit the website [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk) for details. You can try a walk for free and then decide if you want to be a member. For any specific questions contact your organiser or leader in advance. You can access the Walk magazine on the website and shop for books, clothing and accessories and food online. For any queries tel 0131 472 7006 or Email: [scotland@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:scotland@ramblers.org.uk) . You have the option to volunteer – you may wish to lead a local walk, campaign or help maintain local paths.

## Health & Wellbeing

### Put Your West Foot Forward (PYWFF)



The Health Improvement team (HIT) supports communities in West Lothian who are at risk of poor health. They deliver programmes such as the PYWFF initiative which promotes physical activity and mental health and wellbeing. This team is based at Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn.

If you are interested in getting some exercise and keeping fit there are many walks taking place across West Lothian in March. These are run by trained volunteers. Venues include Bathgate, Livingston, Armadale and Linlithgow. There is also a healthy weight maintenance and monitoring service called "Weigh2Go". This

is a weekly free drop in service for those wanting to lose weight/maintain a healthy weight. This is being offered at several locations in West Lothian.

To access further details of these services visit the following page;

[www.westlothianchcp.org.uk/article/2974/West-lothian-Health-Improvement-Team](http://www.westlothianchcp.org.uk/article/2974/West-lothian-Health-Improvement-Team).

You can contact the HIT to register for Weigh2Go on 01506 775626 or

Email: [hit@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:hit@westlothian.gov.uk)

## Local news

### New Partnership centre for Linlithgow.



The new Partnership centre will open this spring after a £4 million investment which has seen the existing county buildings (in the heart of Linlithgow) completely refurbished. This venture has been a long term goal of the council and Partnership centres have proved to be successful in Bathgate, Fauldhouse and Broxburn. A number of services have been relocated to the county buildings which includes Customers Information Service, Linlithgow and Local History library, St. Michaels Day centre for the elderly, Annet House and Family History Society. Police Scotland will also move from its current location nearby. These services will deliver facilities of the highest standard to the local community and ensure the continued use of the county buildings for future generations. The internal space will be used more efficiently, opening up previously unused areas. Services operating will be much improved; indeed the centre will also operate as a community hub for local residents and groups.



### Scottish Drugs Forum job vacancy



The Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) has a job vacancy for a trainee Addiction Worker. The starting salary is £11,232 and is 30 hours per week. It is a fixed term contract for 50 weeks. The closing date for applications is 12 noon 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

For more information or to apply contact SDF Admin, tel 0141 221

1175; Email: [Karolinak@sdf.org.uk](mailto:Karolinak@sdf.org.uk) or visit [www.sdf.org.uk/actions/join-us/job-vacancies](http://www.sdf.org.uk/actions/join-us/job-vacancies)

## General Interest

### The Poverty Alliance



Lynn Law (Fieldwork officer for PA) thanks everyone for their contributions at the West Lothian Service Users Forum meetings attended in July and September last year in Bathgate and for being made so welcome. These meetings focused on what dignity and respect means in the context of social security and a report is now available which has been passed on to the Scottish Government. Two mini reports will also be written and sent to Government contacts and the charitable/voluntary sector. If you would like copies of these reports you can contact Lynn directly. tel 0141 353 0440 or Email: [lynn.law@povertyalliance](mailto:lynn.law@povertyalliance) You can sign up for enews if you would like to receive these reports or indeed information on upcoming campaigns, events, research and news which you may be interested in. Visit [www.povertyalliance.org/getinvolved](http://www.povertyalliance.org/getinvolved) or google "get involved poverty alliance".

There are several options for you to get involved and share your stories. You may wish to attend a one off opportunity or participate on a more regular basis. You could attend an interview with a community action group in Glasgow or speak to the media or politicians at parliament. The choice is yours. Lynn hopes to see the forum again soon.

## **West Lothian Service Users Forum 20th Jan 2017**

### **Guest Speaker Graham Morgan**



Currently Mental Welfare Commission Engagement and Participation Officer. Graham had visited the forum previously in September last year and thanked everyone for their contributions which are always valued by the Mental Welfare Commission. Graham began the session by noting that the Mental Health Care and Treatment Act is currently under review and that the associated UN Committee have suggested that it should be illegal to *forcibly* give a person mental health treatment. Alternatively people should be supported to make their own decisions regarding their treatment and care. Graham has identified 4 conditions necessary for a person to be detained against their will; a mental health diagnosis; if they are a danger to themselves and /or others; have impaired decision- making abilities (which may be due to hearing voices or reduced awareness); the person would benefit from available treatment in hospital.

The forum discussed the importance of being able to speak to someone and have a network of services and support, particularly at home. It was also suggested that there be a sub- department at A & E dedicated to mental health. Both would subsequently reduce admissions to psychiatric wards. Personal accounts of being on a psychiatric ward were described as being extremely frightening but necessary if someone is acutely unwell. Forum identified some of the ways in which a person who is detained could make their wishes known. These were advanced statements, named person and family/friends. Graham identifies proposals made by the Committee for the Rights of disabled people to enable people to make informed choices about their care. These included having a mental health advocate, legal advisors or a support worker to speak on their behalf. The relationship with mental health staff in particular is so important. Having to see a different psychiatrist with every appointment highlights a lack of continuity and is viewed therefore as a barrier to achieving good patient care.

Voluntary work was seen as being beneficial in keeping someone well and avoiding a crisis. Therapeutic interventions, peer support and increasing knowledge and awareness of a person's own illness together with having long term tenancy support in place at home would all help to avoid admission to a psychiatric ward which is not always the answer.

## Support

### New celebrate recovery group



A new recovery group has begun for people affected by addictions, repetitive behaviour or other life controlling issues. This is a gospel centred group which takes place every Tuesday at the Livingston Free Church Jackson Place from 7.30pm – 9pm. You will have the opportunity to share your experiences in a safe environment. For more information contact 07534335518 or Email: Brian Ferguson at

[brianferguson@outlook.com](mailto:brianferguson@outlook.com) or Andrew Murray at [shintyandy@gmail.com](mailto:shintyandy@gmail.com)

### Useful Contacts

Breathing Space

Telephone: 0800 83 85 87

Website: [www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

Health Improvement Team

Telephone: 01506 775 626

Website: [www.westlothianchcp.org.uk](http://www.westlothianchcp.org.uk)

Email: [hit@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:hit@westlothian.gov.uk)

Howden Park Centre

Telephone (box office) 01506 777 666

Website: [www.howdenparkcentre.co.uk](http://www.howdenparkcentre.co.uk)

Email: [box.office@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:box.office@westlothian.gov.uk)

Kadampa Meditation centre Glasgow

Telephone: 0141 5733220

Website: [www.meditateinScotland.org](http://www.meditateinScotland.org)

Email: [info@meditateinScotland.org](mailto:info@meditateinScotland.org)

Xcite Livingston

Telephone: 01506 237970

Website: [www.westlothianleisure.com](http://www.westlothianleisure.com)

No Panic

Telephone (helpline) 0844 967 4848

Website: [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)

Email: [admin@nopanic.org.uk](mailto:admin@nopanic.org.uk)

Poverty Alliance

Telephone: 0141 353 0440

Website: [www.povertyalliance.org](http://www.povertyalliance.org)

Email: [admin@povertyalliance.org](mailto:admin@povertyalliance.org)

Ramblers Scotland

Telephone: 0131 472 7006

Website: [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)

Email: [scotland@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:scotland@ramblers.org.uk)

Samaritans

Telephone: 116 123

Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Scottish Drugs Forum Glasgow

Telephone: 0141 221 1175

Website: [www.sdf.org.uk](http://www.sdf.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@sdf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sdf.org.uk)

If you have any ideas you think would be of interest for future newsletters or if you just need to ask any questions please phone or e mail advocacy. The help will be very much appreciated! Thanks.

Mental Health Advocacy Project West Lothian SCIO. Mental health Resource centre, Strathbrock Partnership Centre, 189a West Main Street, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 5LH [Tel:\(01506\) 857230](tel:01506857230) F: (01506 852954) Email:

[admin@mhap.org.uk](mailto:admin@mhap.org.uk)

*Mental Health Advocacy Project (West Lothian) is a Scottish incorporated Charitable Organisation Charity No. SC01 1560*

This newsletter was produced by Claire. I am a service user with a severe and enduring mental health problem. I currently am a volunteer with the Advocacy project in Broxburn and produce this newsletter for them. I am also a member of the reps group and service users forum that advocacy runs. I am also a member of their Management Committee.

