

Take control of your emotional health

When talking about emotional health in the NHS, we have to be honest; it's tough and we will all have bad days. That is why working to influence and maintain your emotional health is so important.

Emotional health is not about always being happy, but it is linked to your ability to understand and influence your emotional reactions to things. When we are in a positive emotional state, we find it easier to be energised and motivated at work and as such are able to adjust to and deal with setbacks or pressure. In doing so, we are able to help others as well as ourselves to get satisfaction out of life. **In short, it is about having more good days than bad and being able to recover from the bad when they come.**

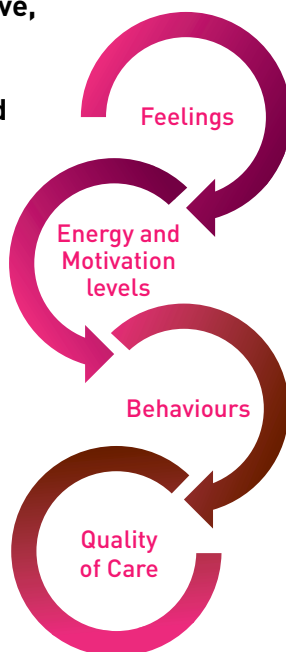
Why is it important?

Picture yourself on a **good day**.

On a good day, you feel motivated, energised and confident that you can positively face any challenge whatever is thrown at you.

On those days, your colleagues benefit because **you are helpful and supportive, proactive and 'on the ball'**. On those days, **your patients benefit as your approach and attitude focuses on their needs, and you can find the energy to go the extra mile** to make sure the care you provide makes a difference to their wellbeing.

In the NHS, our emotional health has a direct impact on the level of care our patients receive. Recent research by wellbeing company Robertson Cooper showed that NHS staff directly relate how they feel to how effective they are in working in partnership with colleagues and the quality of care patients receive.



How can you impact your emotional wellbeing?

Your thinking about situations and the support you seek while you face challenges and the actions you take to re-energise are key to your capacity to manage your emotional health over time. While later in the toolkit we provide advice on how you can create solutions for changing the amount of pressure you face, this factsheet focuses on how you can influence your own actions and reactions to ensure you have as many good days at work as possible.

Two things you can directly have an impact on are tabled below.

Available support – the relationships you have at work

- Having access to supportive colleagues and managers makes a difference to the wellbeing of staff in the NHS. How can you seek out and build positive relationships with colleagues?
- Being able to trust your manager to give you honest and up-to-date information is key. How can you show an interest and openness to their ideas?

Your reactions to challenges and frustrations

- Having confidence in your own ability to cope with challenges and pressure. How do you build confidence in yourself and your ability to cope?
- Being able to see that the effort you put in really makes a difference to patients is important. How can you remind yourself of the impact you make?

Maintaining your emotional health by dealing with pressure

Top tips

Build belief that you can cope

- Envisage future adversities and identify how you would navigate them
- Visualise and plan for success and keep developing your self-awareness
- Work on becoming more optimistic and positive in your thinking
- Know your strengths, take time to understand your abilities
- Be comfortable in yourself and simply be yourself
- Celebrate your successes and really listen to praise when it is offered, this will help you maintain and enhance your self-esteem and self-confidence

Seek support from others

- Don't be afraid to ask for advice and support
- Don't look for conflict but equally don't avoid conflict if it needs addressing
- Develop a clear understanding of who is in your support network
- Actively build new relationships if you feel you lack access to support
- Use support to help you move forward, not just to let off steam

Focus on being flexible and positive in your thinking

- Treat every experience as a learning opportunity
- Revisit past adversities to discover useful lessons to help you in the future
- Detect, challenge and manage your deep-seated beliefs, attitudes and values
- Keep things in perspective – try to develop high-frustration tolerance
- Embrace discomfort as part of the change process
- Avoid thinking traps, for example, blame, erroneous assumptions, tunnel vision
- Be open, flexible and responsive to people and situations

Remember the difference you can make on a good day

- Spend time considering your goals and priorities for life and work
- Remind yourself of the core purpose of your actions when faced with frustration or a setback
- Refocus on your end goal if you meet a block
- Make decisions based on your overall goals and priorities, avoid analysis paralysis

Physical health

- Do all those healthy things you know you ought to do! (Such as having water, fruit and vegetables, limit caffeine and alcohol)
- Go to bed early and wake up early
- Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- Take regular exercise – this can help to act as system re-set, alleviating physical symptoms of poor emotional wellbeing and re-energise you