



somerset **village** &
community agents

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somerset
carers

News from your Village Agent

This month sees a focus on improving mental wellbeing, helping to keep your mind and body healthy and well.

“Wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well” (*Wellbeing: Why It Matters to Health Policy, Jan 2014 The Dept of Health*). Feeling happy inside is a positive state of mind to have and allows us to enjoy life. There are many benefits of improving your mental wellbeing including: length of life, reduced illness and increased recovery.

Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Give to Others and Be Mindful are the five recognised ways to wellbeing recommended by the NHS - www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing.

Here are some ideas of ways to access the 5 ways in our parishes.

Be Mindful: Mindfulness is a popular phrase at the moment and it is considered to be taking the time to enjoy the now. Instead of thinking about what happened in the past or worrying about the future or multi-tasking - take the time to stop and think about the simple pleasures of life. Listening to the rain on the window and tracking the path a rain drop, feeling the warmth of a cup of tea as it passes into your system, listening to the birds singing, spending time tasting your food instead of watching the tv or completing your work as you eat. Placing your feet on the floor, sitting still and noticing things around you will help “ground” yourself when you are feeling anxious or in panic.

There are many meditation and mindfulness sessions for free on the internet but if you are not online, choose some relaxing music and practice some square breathing. Breathe in for a count of 5 seconds, encouraging your lungs and belly to expand. Focus on feeling the air enter your body. Hold for 5 seconds and then exhale from the mouth for a count of 5, visualising pushing all the air from your body. Wait for 5 seconds and repeat for about 10 breaths. You can use the time to picture yourself somewhere relaxing and pleasurable, like the beach, by a lake or in a forest.

Connect and Keep Learning by joining a parish group such as a local history group in the evening, join the weekly coffee morning or men’s shed, attend the Talking Café or your local carers group.

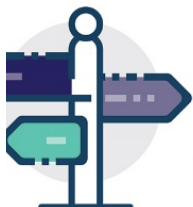
Be Active by trying some Age UK Tai Chi and gentle Yoga or dance for about £4 a session. Ask me for further information.

Spring is an ideal time to access the green space around us, and being out in nature has a powerful positive effect on our wellbeing. (*BJPsych International publication 2017 Nov*). Make use of walking, gardening, try a park run, allotments or volunteer with your parish to keep community areas tidy. Doctor’s surgeries and Dementia Action Alliance groups run health walks with a range of abilities. Check on line or ask at the surgery.

You can **Give to Others** in easy and cost free ways – be there for someone who needs a friendly ear, walk a friends dog if they are unable to, or donate your time to a local charity or group such as your local carers group. People giving their own time to support others have an increased sense of wellbeing and satisfaction – helping others can help you!

Look in your local publications for local wellbeing co-ordinators for shared meditation, mindfulness and other wellbeing support or try the Somerset Wellbeing Directory. <https://wellbeingsouthsomerset.org>

Village Agents work with people of all ages and deal with a wide variety of issues although a considerable number of our clients are elderly and involves social care issues. Helping to solve these problems may ultimately help the elderly to remain living independently for longer. Agents also have the role of helping to shape services by feeding back to the appropriate body information about gaps in current services e.g. transportation. They can also motivate



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and support a community to respond to a local need by working together to address issues e.g. by helping them to set up a coffee morning for a group of lonely people or start a volunteer car scheme.

Look us up on www.somersetrcc.org.uk or contact your local Village Agent:

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