

How to be happy and healthy when you are learning or working

Easy read book



The Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
paid for this book.

The National Institute of Adult
Continuing Education (NIACE) wrote
this book.

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About this book



This book is for people with learning difficulties who are

- at college or
- about to go to college.



In this book we use the word 'college' to talk about any places where you go to learn.

These places might be universities, community centres, training centres or other learning centres.

We use the word 'college' for all these places.

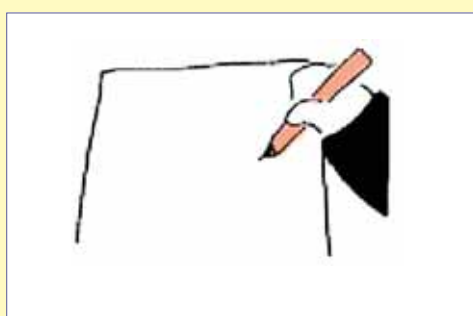


This book is also for people with learning difficulties who are

- working or
- about to start work.



This book gives you information and advice to help you be happy and healthy when you are learning or working.



This book has lots of blank spaces where you can write or draw things.

If you have the most up to date Adobe Acrobat software you can write in the text boxes and save this as your own personal document.



This is **your book** to use in the way that is best for you.

You do not have to read it all.

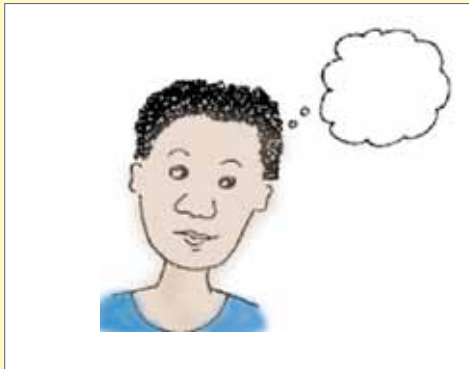
You could flick through it and see what sections you would like to read first.

You can read other sections later if you like.

You could read it with a support worker or someone else who helps you.

We hope it gives you helpful ideas and you enjoy using it!

About being happy and healthy



What is mental health?

Mental health is about how you think and feel about

- yourself
- other people
- your life
- your future.



Good mental health is where most of the time you

- can go out and about and meet people
- can do things like working or learning or other activities
- feel okay about your life and the future
- can cope with changes in life.

Good mental health does not mean you think things are perfect all the time.

It means things are okay most of the time.

Sometimes people have mental health difficulties.

A mental health difficulty is where you have thoughts or feelings that make it hard to cope a lot of the time.

If you have a mental health difficulty you might

- feel very sad or angry or nervous
- worry a lot about talking to people
- find it very difficult to leave your home.

You might get help from a doctor or take medication.

Anybody can have mental health difficulties.

Sometimes they last for a short time.

Sometimes they last for a long time.

Lots of people have a mental health difficulty at some time in their life.

If you have a mental health difficulty you can get help and make changes to your life so you can feel better.



What is physical health?

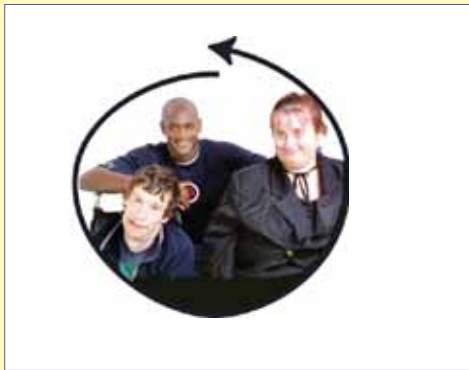
Good physical health is where you feel well and healthy.

It helps to do exercise and eat healthy food.

It helps if you do not drink lots of alcohol or smoke or take drugs.



Why is it important to feel well and healthy?



If you look after yourself then you feel happier and good about yourself.

There are lots of things you can do to look after yourself and feel well and healthy.

You can read about these on page 11.

Are learning and working good for you?



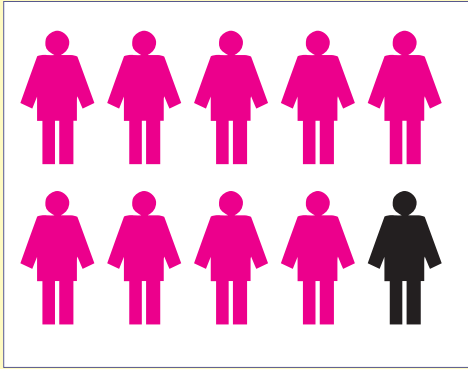
Yes, learning and working can be very good for you, if

- you enjoy it
- it helps you learn new things and develop new skills
- you think you do it well
- you get support that is right for you.

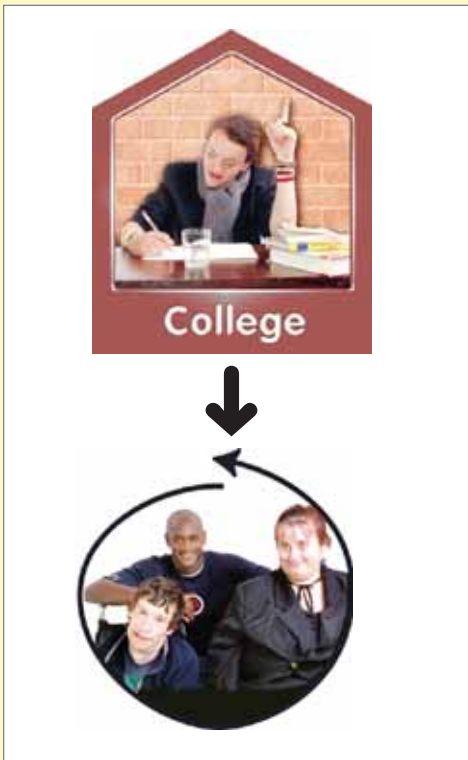


Learning can

- help you if you are finding it hard to cope with life
- help you get out and about and meet new people
- be exciting and interesting
- help you feel good about yourself
- help you get a job
- help you make plans for your future.

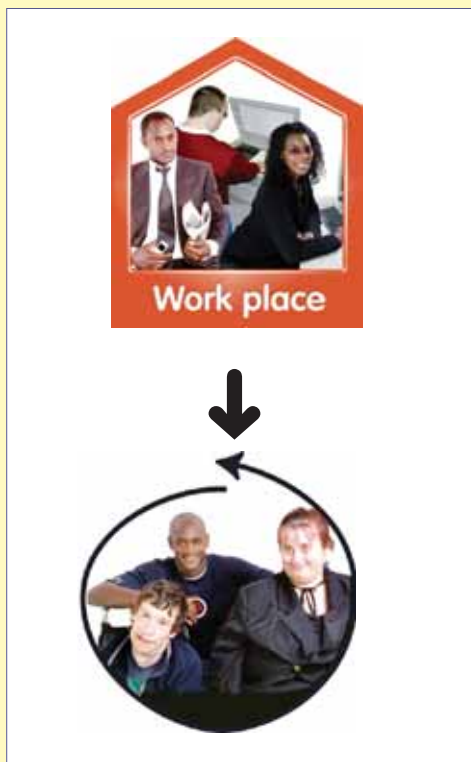


One project found out that 9 out of 10 people said learning made them feel more happy and healthy¹.



One person who did research into the good things about learning said...

'Learning brings more happiness than having sex, playing or watching sport or doing the national lottery.'²



Working can

- help you get out and about and meet new people
- be exciting and interesting
- help you do something useful
- help you earn your own money.

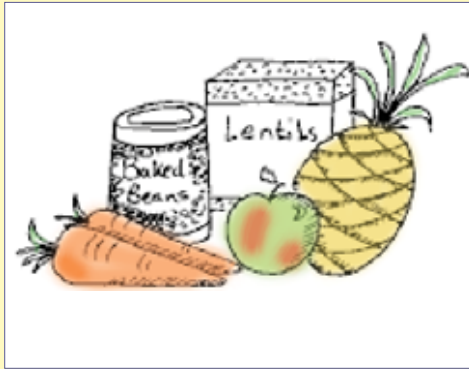


One project found out that 9 out of 10 disabled people who work say their job

- makes their life better
- makes them active
- helps them be in control of their money.³

Look after yourself

Here are some things you can do to look after yourself and be happy and healthy.



Eat well.

You should have a good diet with things like

- meat, fish, beans and soya products
- dairy products like milk, cheese, yoghurt and eggs
- bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice
- lots of fruit and vegetables
- nuts and seeds
- not much salt, fat or sugar.



Drink sensibly.

Drinking too much alcohol is bad for you. Women should not drink more than 14 units a week.

Men should not drink more than 21 units a week.

(There are 3 units in a pint of beer.

There are 2 units in a small glass of wine.)



Keep active and exercise.

There are **loads** of things you can do to be active and exercise like

- going for a walk, run, bike ride or swim
- taking up a sport like football, netball, or tennis
- dancing
- doing an exercise DVD at home
- going to the gym.

We all need to exercise, to make us feel good.



Do not ignore your feelings.

If something is making you upset, worried, nervous or anxious, talk to someone you trust about it.

Cry, shout or write down or draw your feelings.

If you feel very upset a lot of the time talk to your doctor.



Take a break.

It is really important to rest.

Make time to relax during your day.

Have a tea break, go for a walk or have a bath.

Have days out or holidays.

Having a break and doing something different can help you feel better.



Be happy with who you are.

Everybody has good and bad things about them.

Nobody is perfect.

Like yourself for who you are and all the special things you bring to the world.



Care for others.

Do something nice for somebody else.

Volunteer to help other people.

If you have pets, spend time with them.

This can make you feel useful and good about yourself.



Keep in touch with friends and family.

Spend time with people you love and who make you feel good.



Ask for help.

We all need help and support.

If life is hard, ask for help.

Ask friends, family, teachers, support workers, people you work with or doctors for help.



Do something you are good at.

This can make you feel good.

It reminds you what you can do well.

Keep learning.

If you feel life is getting boring find a course or learn by yourself.

Learn about something that has always interested you.

There are plenty of things to learn like

- art and crafts
- playing a musical instrument
- how to use computers
- singing... and lots more.

If you are doing a job, see if you can get training to learn a new skill.

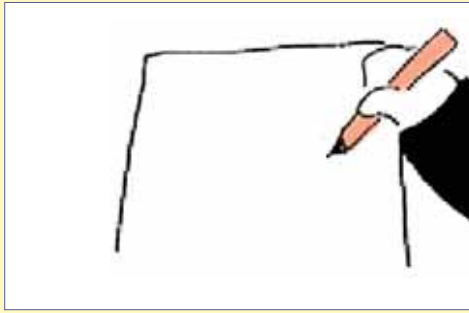


Have fun!

Do something **you** enjoy doing like

- meet friends
- read a good book
- listen to music
- watch a film
- eat out.

Do things that make you laugh, smile or feel good.



Make plans

Chose up to 4 of the ideas on pages 11–14.

Or add some of your own ideas about things that are good for you.

Think about what you can do to look after yourself and be happy and healthy.

Write or draw your ideas here.

I am going to...

For example

Eat well.

I will plan my food shopping to buy healthy food.

I will keep a diary of what I am eating.



I am going to...

I am going to...



I am going to...

Look after yourself at college or work



At college or work there are lots of things you can do to look after yourself and feel well and healthy.



How do you travel to college or work?

Could you walk or cycle there?

Add exercise to your everyday life.

If you get the bus or a lift, get out and walk for part of the journey.

See if any other learners or people you work with want to walk or cycle with you.



What do you eat for lunch?

Do you buy your lunch from a café or shop?

It might have lots of sugar, salt or fat in it.

It can be expensive if you do this every day.

Instead

- bring healthy sandwiches, salads and snacks with you from home
- buy healthy food. Some college canteens serve healthy food.

How does your college or work celebrate things like

- World Mental Health Day and
- Anti-Smoking Week?



These are special days and weeks where you can learn more about important things – like good mental health or giving up smoking.

Find out whether your college or work celebrates days and weeks like these.

If they do celebrate them – get involved.

Make posters, give out leaflets, raise money or do something else that helps.

If your college or work does not celebrate them, help them do this.

Talk to your teacher or boss, and other learners or staff.

At college

The government is helping some colleges to be 'healthy colleges'.

Healthy colleges look after their learners and staff so they are happy and healthy.

Some colleges have things like

- healthy food for learners to buy
- a helpline or counselling
- sexual health clinics and advice
- condoms that learners can get for free
- help with giving up smoking
- advice about alcohol and drugs
- help with getting rid of stress and anxiety
- a nurse or sports worker in the college
- and lots more.

Ask what your college is doing to be a 'healthy college'.

Talk to your learning support manager at college.

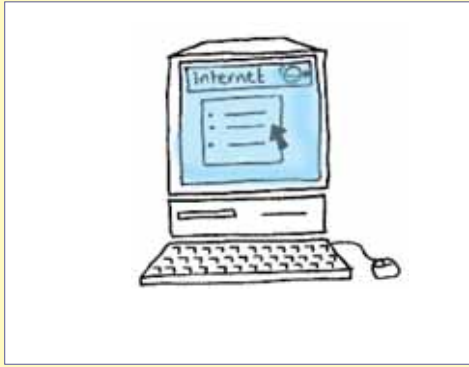
What activities or sports can you do at college?

Lots of colleges have things like

- fitness rooms
- gyms
- sports halls
- football pitches
- tennis courts
- keep fit classes or sessions.

Find out what you can do at college.





You can find out more about how to make your college healthy at www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=hfep

A lot of the information is written for the managers of colleges.

But it might give you useful ideas.

You can show it to staff and other learners at college.

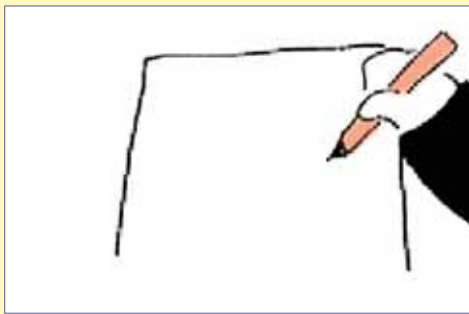
What can you do to be happy and healthy at college?

What would you like staff at your college to do?

Write or draw your ideas here.

Here are some ideas.

- I am going to go for a walk at lunchtimes.
- I would like my college to run sessions about getting rid of stress and anxiety.





How can you tell staff at your college about your ideas?

- Put them in a suggestion box.
- Talk to your teachers and other learners about your ideas.
- Join your college learner council or forum. Look at page 28.

At work

Lots of workplaces are called Mindful Employers.

This means they think it is important to help staff to have good mental health.

Some workplaces are

- training staff so they treat people with mental health difficulties fairly
- helping people who have been off work with mental health difficulties to come back to work easily
- running workshops about looking after yourself
- running counselling services.

Even if your workplace is not a Mindful Employer they might do things to help staff to have good mental health.

Talk to someone working in human resources or personnel.

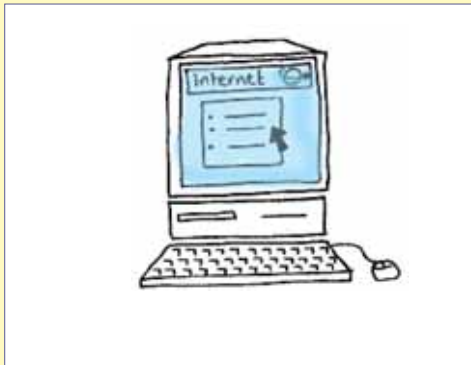


Lots of workplaces have things like

- sports clubs
- social clubs where people can spend time together outside of work
- lunchtime or after-work activity sessions like keep fit or yoga.

Some big workplaces have their own gyms.

In other workplaces staff can pay a low price to go to a local gym.



Find out more about how to be healthy at work on the Internet.

Some good websites are

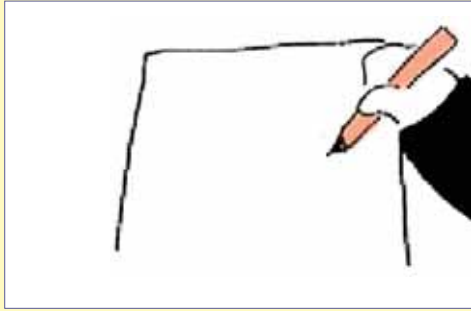
www.workingforhealth.gov.uk

www.bhf.org.uk/Thinkfit/

A lot of the information is written for managers at work.

But even if you are not a manager it might give you ideas.

You can show it to your manager and other staff.



What can you do to be happy and healthy at work?

What would you like people at your work to do?

Write or draw your ideas here.

Here are some ideas.

- I am going to eat fruit instead of chocolate or crisps.
- I would like my work to make sure staff can pay a low price to go to the local gym.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write or draw their ideas.

How can you tell other people at work about your ideas?



- Put them in a suggestion box.
- Write about them in a questionnaire.
- Talk to other staff or your boss or someone working in 'human resources' or 'personnel'.
- Join discussion groups, councils and forums where you can share your ideas. Look at page 29.

Being involved



What is 'being involved'?

Being involved is about having your say. It is about speaking up for yourself and helping make decisions.



Why is it important to be involved?

Are you a learner at college?

If you are, then you are an expert in what it is like to be at college.

Are you working?

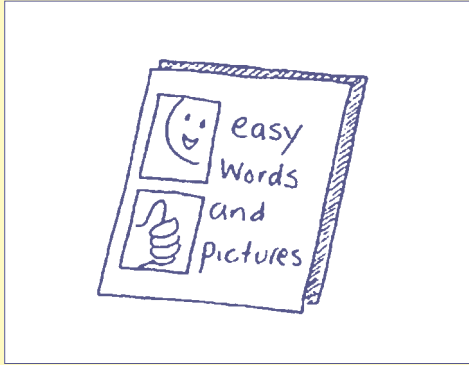
If you are, then you are an expert in what it is like to work at your workplace.

So you might have ideas about how things can be better.

You could help make college or work a better place for you and other people.

But some people do not want to be involved. That is fine.

Some people do want to be involved, but need support.



What support can I get to be involved?

You might find being involved a bit scary. This is normal.

Other learners, teachers and support workers could help and support you.

Most people find they soon feel more confident.

You have a right to be involved.

College or work should support you.

Ask your college or work if you need things like

- easy read information
- communication aids.

Most communities have 'self-advocacy groups' for people with learning difficulties.

A self-advocacy group is a group run by people with learning difficulties.

It helps people

- find out about their rights
- have their say
- make changes to local services.

Joining a self-advocacy group can help you to learn to speak up for yourself.

Some colleges have self-advocacy courses or classes.



Be involved at college

All colleges should have a 'learner involvement strategy'.

This is a plan about how learners can be involved in making decisions about life at college.

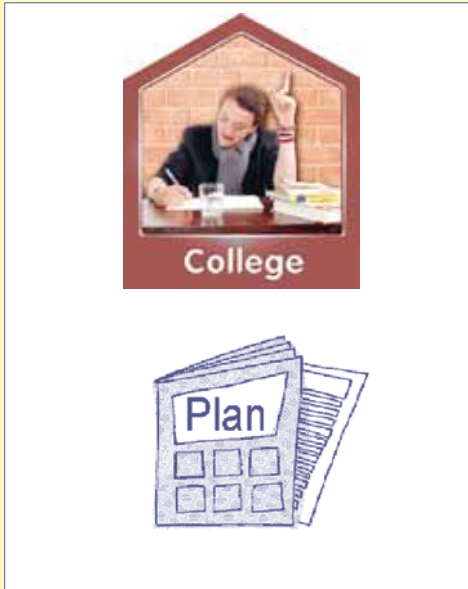
Colleges might

- have a student forum or council
- run a meeting or a discussion group
- send out a questionnaire to learners
- have learners on the college governing body
- having a suggestion box
- having an online forum on the Internet.

Sometimes colleges have 'reps'.

Reps are learners who go to meetings to speak up for other learners.

Your college might not do all of these things. But they should have ways for you to be involved.



Here are some examples of how learners have made changes at college.

- At one college, students told the college they wanted food in the vending machines to be healthy.

So the college changed the vending machines.

Now they have fruit in them.

- At a different college learners with mental health difficulties set up a group to support each other.

They raised awareness about mental health in the college.

They also ran a welfare week at the college.



Be involved at work

Being involved at work is different from college.

Some workplaces have things like

- meetings or discussion groups or surveys to find out what staff think
- suggestion boxes.

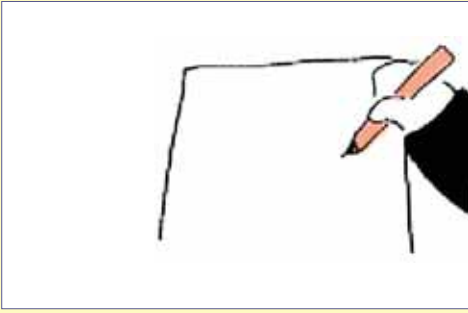


Here are some examples of how staff have made changes at work.

- At one charity, staff decided they wanted to celebrate World Mental Health Day. They put up posters. They asked other staff to write down what they do to stay happy and healthy at work. Then they used this information to make a booklet for staff.



- At one factory, staff set up a 'well-being group'. They set up yoga sessions at lunchtimes. They set up an after-work running club. They spoke to the managers who agreed to put showers in the factory. This means staff can shower after doing exercise.



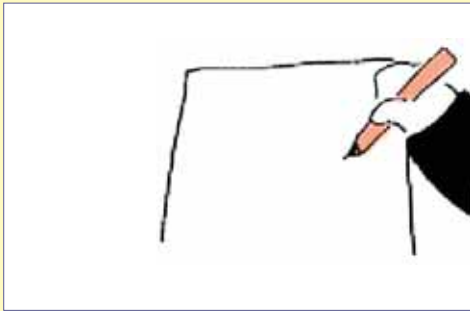
Find out what your college or work already does to involve learners or staff, like forums or discussion groups.

Write or draw what you find out here.

Ask people at college or work how you can get involved.

Or you could set up some groups yourself.

Feel good about yourself



Over the next few pages you will find some 'mind maps'.

A 'mind map' is a way of writing ideas down.

Some of the mind maps already have some ideas in them to help you feel good.

The blank spaces are for **you** to write down and draw things.



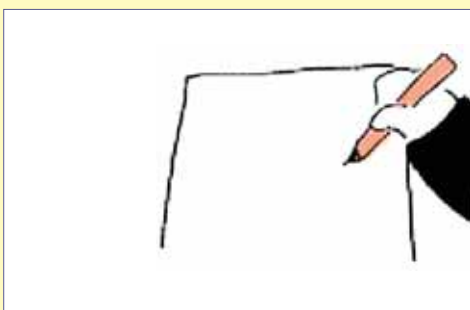
When you write down or draw good things about you and your life, this can help you feel good about yourself.

It can help you feel more in control of your life.



In the future, if you are feeling unhappy or not good about yourself, look back at what you wrote or drew.

This will help you feel better about yourself.



Start off by writing or drawing 1 or 2 things.

Add more things later on.

I am really good
at learning new
things.

**'Feeling good about
myself.'**

Write down or draw things
that can help you feel good
about yourself and your life.

It is ok to make mistakes and get
things wrong - I can learn from these.

I am an important person and I need to look after myself.



'I am proud of...'

Write down or draw things that you have done in your life that you are proud of.

These can be big things or small things, like

- getting a certificate
- using the bus on your own
- giving up smoking.



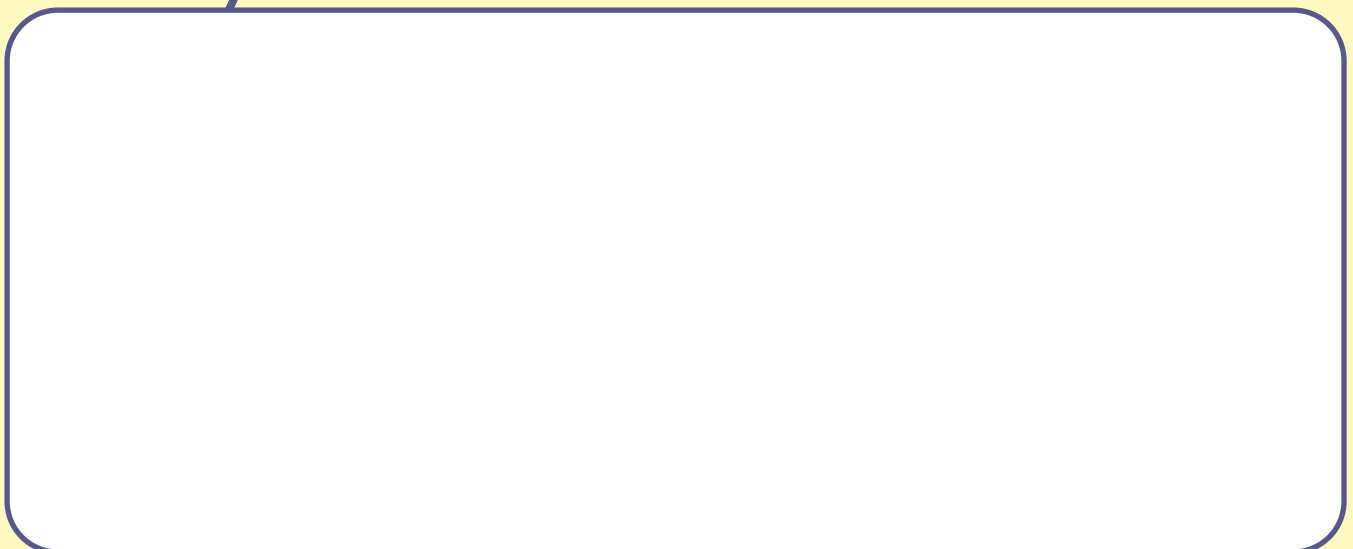


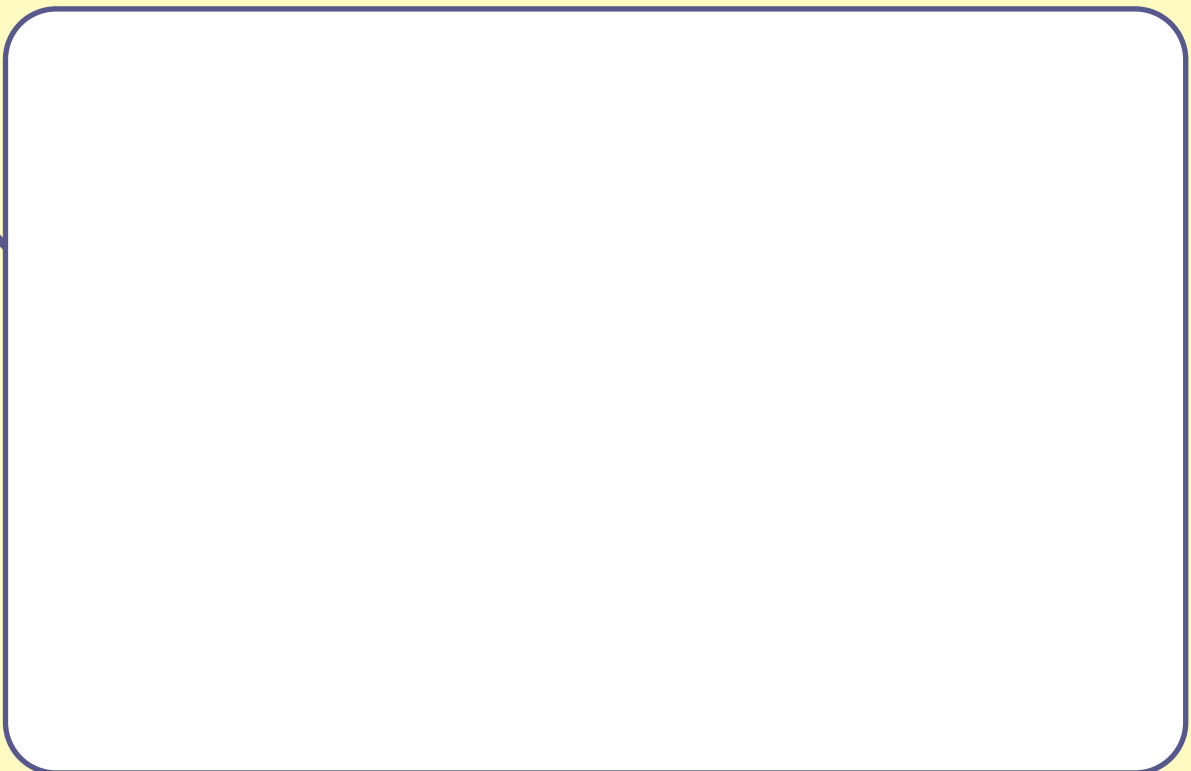


'These things make me feel better when I feel down...'

Write down or draw things that make you feel happy, like

- ringing a friend to have a chat
- going for a walk in the park.

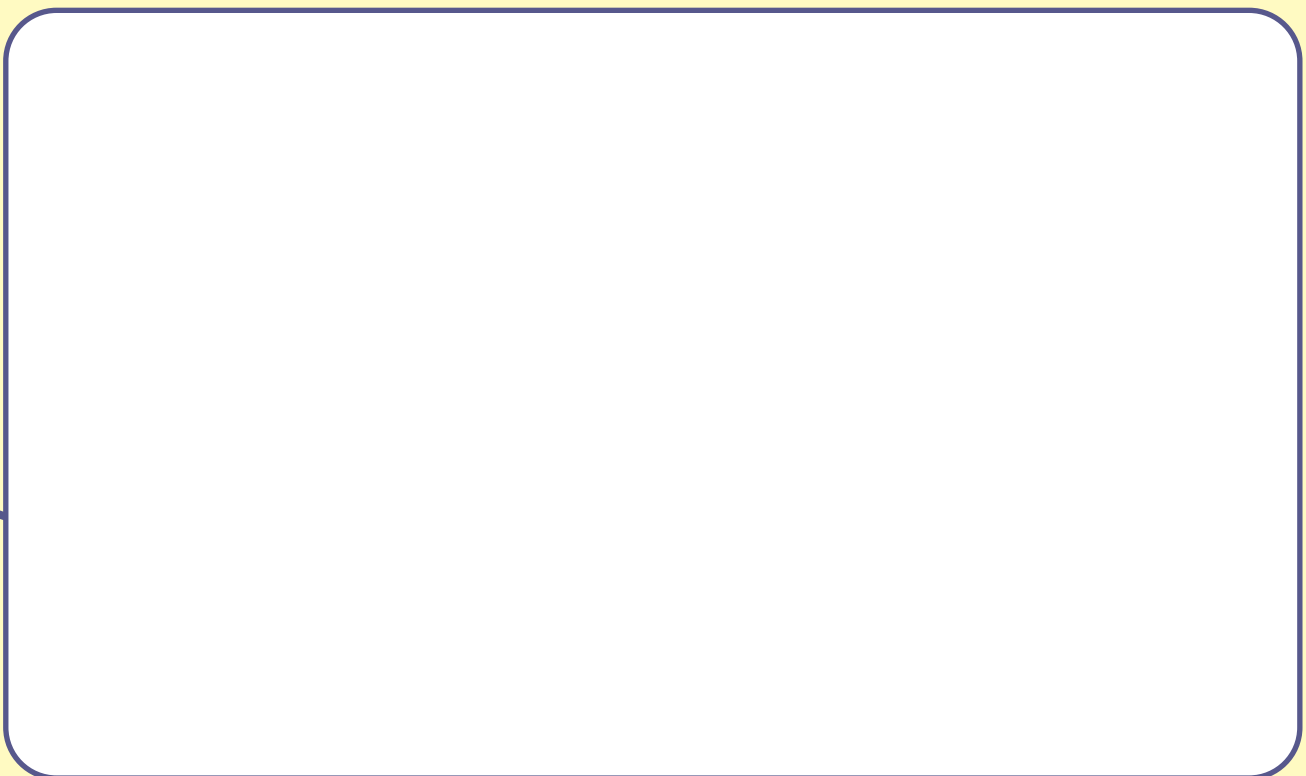
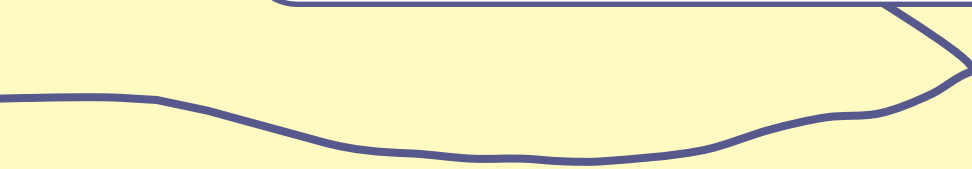
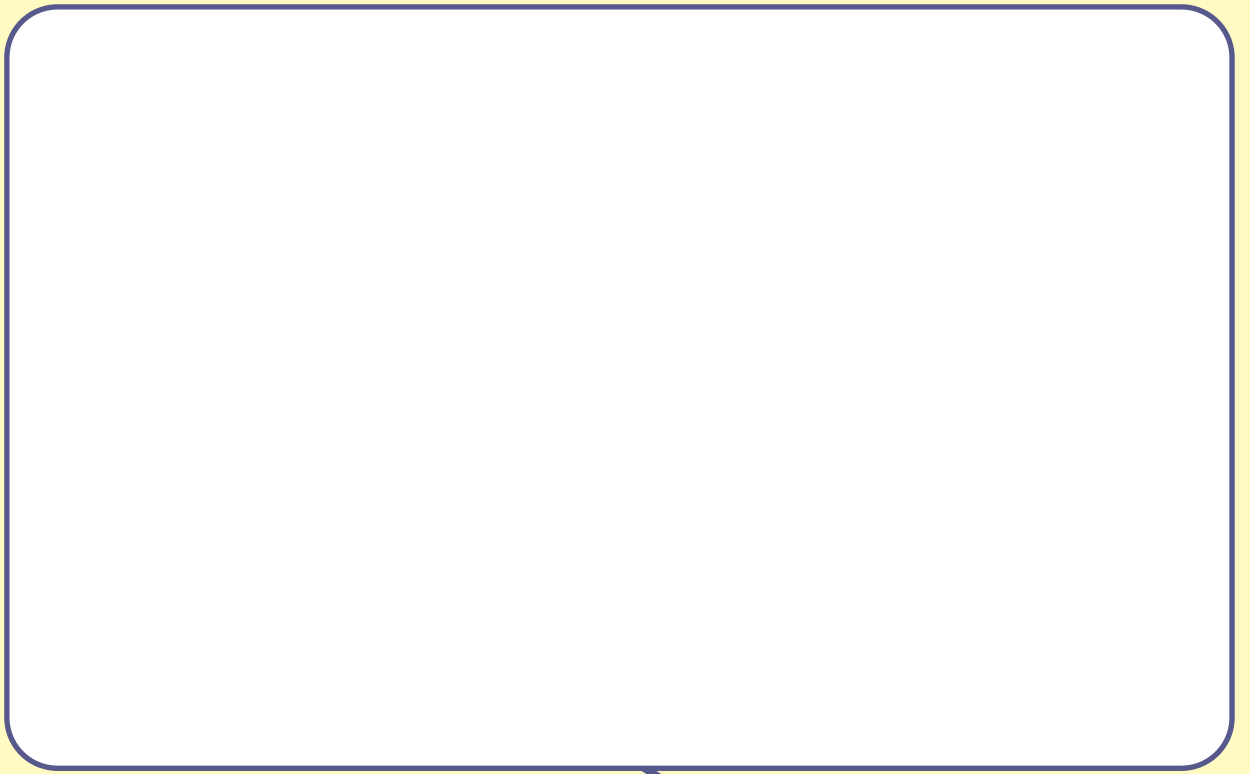






'These people help and support me...'
Write down or draw people in your life who help
and support you.





Being treated well and treating other people well

It is important that you are treated well and get respect.

Also, it is important that you treat other people well and respect them.



The law

The Disability Discrimination Act says it is against the law for colleges or workplaces to treat disabled people unfairly.

This includes

- people with learning difficulties
- people with serious and long-term mental health difficulties.

Your college should have a plan about how to support disabled learners.

This might be called a 'disability equality scheme' or a 'single equality scheme'.

Colleges and workplaces should make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable adjustments are changes to make sure you can learn or work in the best way for you. They might be things like

- giving you large print information with pictures
- letting you work at times that suit you
- giving you a note taker or support worker
- giving you extra equipment to do your job.

Everybody will have different needs.

If you need reasonable adjustments, talk to your teacher, boss, support worker or someone else who you trust.

Stop abuse

(This information is taken from a leaflet called 'Safer Practice, Safer Learning'.)



Abuse is where someone does something to you that makes you feel bad or hurts you.

Sometimes it is like really bad bullying. It is not right and people should not do it.



You have the right to feel safe at college or work.

Other people should not hurt or abuse you.

You should not hurt or abuse other people.



There are different types of abuse.

- **Physical abuse** is where people touch you in a way that hurts, like hitting, kicking, pinching, burning, pushing or tying you up.



- **Sexual abuse** is where people touch your body or make you touch their body when you do not want to. Or it is when people make you do sexual things with them when you do not want to. It is also where people say sexual things and you do not want them to.



- **Psychological** or emotional abuse is like really bad bullying.



- **Financial, money or material** abuse is where people steal or bully you into giving them money or things you own.



- **Neglect** is where people who are meant to give you personal care support ignore you.



- **Discrimination** is where people treat you badly because of your
 - age
 - disability
 - gender (whether you are male or female)
 - ethnicity
 - religion or
 - sexuality (whether you choose to go on dates or with boys or girls).



If you think you have been hurt or abused tell someone you trust.

It can be difficult to tell other people.

But you have the right to be safe.

If you tell someone you trust they should help you to make sure it stops.

Make action plans



This book has given lots of information and advice about things that can help you be happy and healthy.

Do you have ideas about things you would like to do in your life to make you happy and healthy?

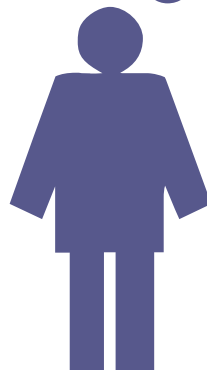
This is what one person told us they would like to do.

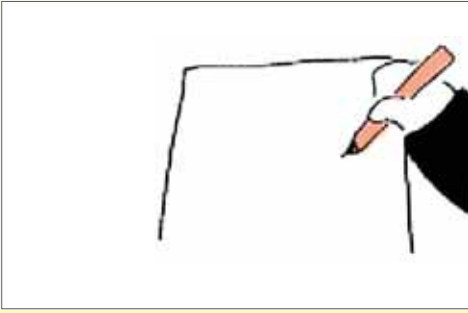
I want to walk to work 3 times a week.

I want to keep a diary so I can write down or draw my feelings.

I want to join the student council.

I want to help my workplace celebrate World Mental Health Day.





On the next few pages you can make 'action plans'.

An 'action plan' is where you write down or draw something you want to do or a change you want to make to your life.

Example

- what you want to do - for example
'I want to join a dance class'
- when you are going to do it by - for example
'by October 15th'
- what help or support or information you might need to do it - for example
'I might need information from my local college. I might need help from my support worker to start the class.'

I want to...

I am going to do this by (write a date here)...

Write down or draw what help or information you might need...

Tick here once you have done what you wanted to!

I want to...

I am going to do this by (write a date here)...

Write down or draw what help or information you might need...

Tick here once you have done what you wanted to!

I want to...

I am going to do this by (write a date here)...

Write down or draw what help or information you might need...

Tick here once you have done what you wanted to!

I want to...

I am going to do this by (write a date here)...

Write down or draw what help or information you might need...

Tick here once you have done what you wanted to!

Where to go for other information and advice



In the area where you live there might be

- classes or groups to help you be healthy and happy.

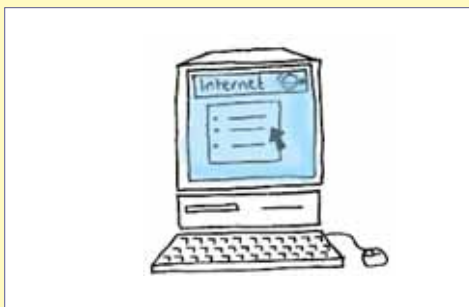
Talk to people who support you like support workers or doctors.

- books or leaflets about things you can do in your local area.



Visit your local

- sports and leisure centres
- library
- community centre
- neighbourhood centre
- religious centre.



- other types of information and support to help you look after yourself.

Look on the Internet.

Or talk to your local Learning Disability Partnership Board or Self-Advocacy Group.

Write down or draw what you find out here.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page below the instruction. It is intended for the user to write down or draw their findings.



Other useful websites and phone numbers

Advocate 4 Health

Advocate for Health is a group of people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. They helped to make a website about how to be healthy.

Website - www.advocate4health.org.uk

British Institute for Learning Disabilities

The British Institute for Learning Disabilities works to make life better for people with learning disabilities.

Website - www.bild.org.uk

Clear Thoughts

This is a really useful website for people with learning difficulties. It has lots of information about looking after yourself and having good mental health.

Website - www.clearthoughts.info

Direct gov

This is a government website giving lots of information about looking after yourself and being healthy, learning, working and your rights.

Website - www.direct.gov.uk

Drinkline

This gives advice for people who are worried about how much alcohol they drink.

Telephone - 0800 917 8282

Easy Health

This is a website about health. It is for people with learning difficulties.

Website - www.easyhealth.org.uk

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities tries to help people with learning disabilities to have good chances in life. It tries to make services better.

It is part of the Mental Health Foundation.

Website - www.learningdisabilities.org.uk

Frank

This website and phone number gives information and advice about drugs.

Telephone - 0800 776 600

Textphone service for deaf people - text FRANK to 0800 917 9765

Website - www.talktofrank.com

Mencap

Mencap gives support, services and advice to people with learning disabilities and their families.

Telephone - 0808 808 1111

Email - help@mencap.org.uk

Website - www.mencap.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation

The Mental Health Foundation has lots of information and advice about mental health.

Website - www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Mind has lots of information and advice about mental health.

Website - www.mind.org.uk

Telephone for information - 0845 7660163

NHS direct

You can contact NHS direct if you have a very important health problem and need advice straight away.

The website has lots of information.

Telephone - 0845 4647

Website - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Rethink

Rethink helps people who have serious mental health difficulties, like schizophrenia, to have a better life.

Website - www.rethink.org

Samaritans

You can call the Samaritans if you are feeling very sad and need to talk to somebody.

Telephone - 08457 909090

Website - www.samaritans.org.uk

SKILL

SKILL supports disabled learners and students who are over 16.

Telephone - 0800 328 5050

Website - www.skill.org.uk

Smokefree

You can get information and advice about giving up smoking.

Telephone 0800 0224332

Website - www.gosmokefree.nhs.uk

Valuing People Now

Valuing People Now was the government's plan to make life better for people with learning disabilities. This website has lots of information to help make this happen.

Website - www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

You can read about finding a job at this website page -

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople120.jsp

Young minds

This website has information and advice about good mental health for young people.

Website - www.youngminds.org.uk

Endnotes

- 1 Aldridge, F. and Lavender, P. (2000) *Impact of Learning on Health* Leicester: NIACE
- 2 Gallup/North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council *Finding Happiness*
http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/yourlearning/why_is_learning_important.asp
- 3 Office for Disability Issues (2008) *Experiences and Expectations of Disabled People*
www.officefordisability.gov.uk/docs/res/eedp/eedp-exec-summary.pdf