



Our door is **always**
open for you...



Every one of us goes through difficult periods during our lives, sometimes work related and sometimes not.



Welcome to the VetPartners Wellbeing Booklet

Within this booklet you will find some information on the numerous organisations out there that can provide individuals with assistance, whether they are looking for help for themselves, or wanting to look out for others.

There are also some practical resources contained within, that may be of benefit to you, or someone you know.

First though, a little about what the aims of the VetPartners Wellbeing group are:

We want to:

Promote and foster a culture of self-sustaining wellbeing of all our team, that is inclusive, diverse and the envy of other veterinary organisations. "Helping us help ourselves."

By:

- Ensuring adequate training resources are available, both for:
 - a) Management** – at a group and site level to identify and prioritise individuals' needs.
 - b) Everyone** – to increase awareness of mental health issues and spot and help/direct others.
- Raising self-awareness of the importance of all aspects of wellbeing including mental health, encompassing concepts such as 'Mindfulness' and 'Emotional Intelligence' and in doing so work to reduce stigma and increase openness within the organisation to talk about such issues.
- Ensuring suitable resources are available (anonymously if necessary) at all sites to promote general wellbeing as well as for those at point of crisis.
- Encouraging leadership attitudes/interventions to be inspiring and equipping individuals to help themselves and others. Lead by example and foster a self-sustaining culture.
- Establishing and maintaining a constant feedback loop to ensure the wellbeing of all employees is being cared for appropriately.

With reference to this last point, please get in contact with any comments at:
wellbeing@vetpartners.co.uk

Looking after your own **mental health** is really important

The New Economics Foundation have developed 'Five ways to wellbeing.'

A review of the most up to date evidence suggests that building the following five connections into our day-to-day lives is important for wellbeing:

Take Notice

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Be Active

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Connect

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

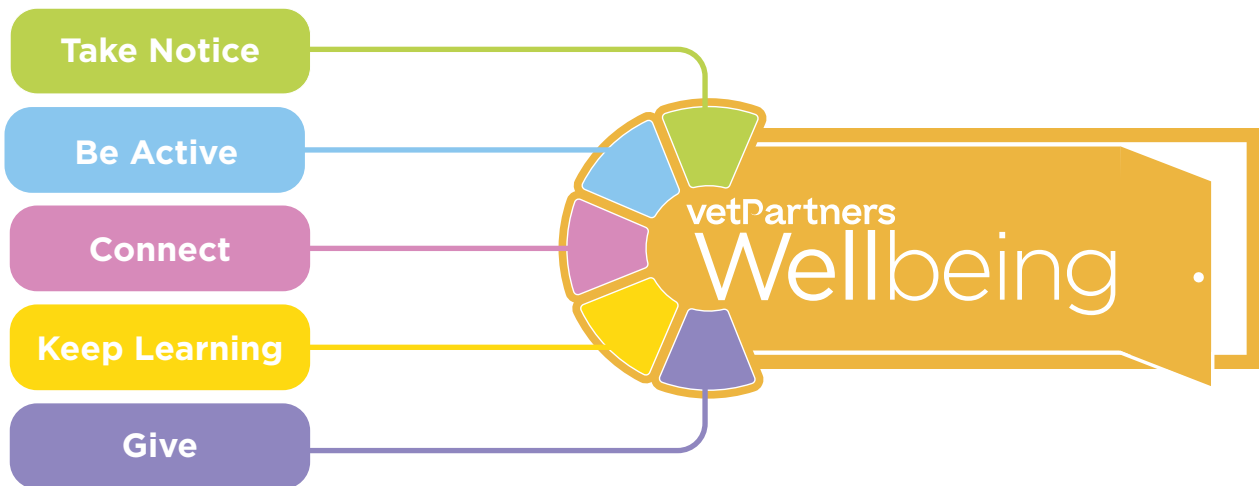
Keep Learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

We've incorporated this into our logo with some **suggestions** of our own:



Take Notice

Savour the moment

- Stop looking at your phone
- Change your commute
- Observe others' feelings and actions
- Get a plant in your life

Be Active

...a bit each day

- Get outside at break times
- Walk to reception, don't phone
- Cycle to work
- Organise after work sports

Connect

Build 'real' relationships

- Listen, when you ask people "how are you?"
- Phone or visit people, not email/text
- Join a club
- Learn something new from a colleague

Keep Learning

Set some goals

- Join an evening class
- Set up a book club
- Research a different country
- Follow the news

Give

Your time and energy

- Perform one act of kindness every week
- Volunteer in the community
- Provide help for a charity
- Say thank you

We know **stress** is a big factor in our daily lives and it affects everyone differently

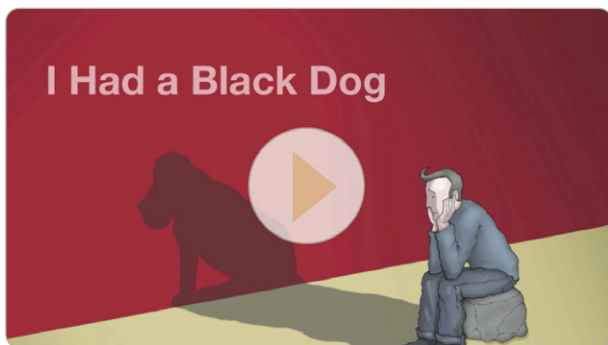
Below is the link to a great video animation (produced by the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program, Australia) that gives an insight into different ways of coping:

<https://youtu.be/Id5JypUYT-o> (or Google “Stress bucket animation”)

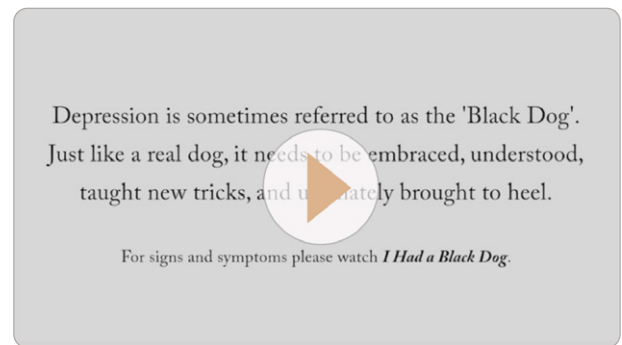


Stress can lead to anxiety and depression and vice versa

Understanding what depression is can be difficult for some people and learning to cope with it can be very challenging. Below are the links to two more video animations (produced by the World Health Organisation) that give an insight into this problem:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc>



<https://youtu.be/2VRRx7Mtep8> (or Google “Living with a black dog, depression”)

The stress bucket

The diagram below is a summary of the Stress Bucket video and can be used as a resource to help you identify different sources of stress and the different coping methods.



Some warning signs of **mental health illness** are listed below:

Changes in physical appearance

- Looking unkempt; changes to sleep patterns
- Lack of attention to diet, physical appearance and personal hygiene
- Look sad, depressed and anxious
- Slow in moving and thinking; difficulty in remembering things
- Speak in a slow and monotonous way or being unclear
- Can also be agitated, irritable and easily moved to tears
- Often people with depression have a strategy of appearing outwardly happy

Attitudes and thinking

A negative view of themselves, the world and the future. May say things like:

- I'm a failure
- I've let everyone down
- Nothing good ever happens to me
- I'm worthless
- No-one loves me
- I am so alone
- Life is not worth living
- There is nothing good out there
- Things will always be bad

Possible signs in the workplace

- Decreased productivity
- Morale problems, avoiding social activities
- Lack of cooperation
- Safety problems
- Absenteeism - not at work
- Presenteeism- at work, but not mentally engaged with work
- Frequent complaints of being tired all of the time
- Complaints of unexplained aches and pains
- Alcohol and/or other drug misuse

A couple of other resources of support around mental health (for Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)

www.orchaco.uk - Loads of apps on here that you can download to manage a range of conditions, just type a word in the search engine (e.g anxiety/stress/CBT).

www.lltff.com - Living life to the full has free on-line resources to manage stress and other conditions. The resources help you work out why you feel the way you do and improve confidence and wellbeing. (You need to sign up to access the resources).

Getting a good night's **sleep** is so important for your wellbeing, and there are plenty of resources out there to help those struggling with poor sleep.

The Centre for Clinical Interventions (Australia) has some useful handouts that can be downloaded at: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Sleep>

Other pages on their website have more information available for download regarding sleep and relaxation techniques. Below is one typical handout – with a useful muscle relaxation technique that can help relieve stress:

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is muscle tension. This can result in feeling 'tense' or can lead to muscle aches and pains, as well as leaving some people feeling exhausted. Think about how you respond to anxiety. Do you 'tense up' when you're feeling anxious? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful in cases where anxiety is especially associated to muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through a common form of relaxation designed to reduce muscle tension.

Muscle tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth so your jaw feels tight or maybe your shoulders become tense. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and headaches.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practice this technique consistently.

Preparing for relaxation

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points:

- Physical injuries. If you have any physical injuries or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- Select your surroundings. Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio and using soft lighting.
- Make yourself comfortable. Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing and take off your shoes.
- Internal mechanics. Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

General Procedure

1. Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
2. When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
3. Relax the muscles and keep relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
4. When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to “make a muscle”.
3. **Left hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your left hand.
4. **Left upper arm.** Bring your left forearm up to your shoulder to “make a muscle”.
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you’re yawning.
8. **Neck.** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles.
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg.** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.

You will have noticed our **toilet door poster**

which provides contact details for various outside organisations.

Remember, the VetPartners HR team can be contacted through VetNet if you need any support, but the next few pages give a bit more information about some of these outside organisations and how they can help.



VetPartners have enrolled in the above employee assistance programme. It is not just for injury and illness. More information and T&Cs can be found in the letters that were sent to you directly, but below is a brief summary of what is included in our company paid plan for Health & Wellbeing:

- Acupressure
- Allergy testing, including food intolerance and nutrition
- Tests
- Aromatherapy massages
- Bowen and Alexander techniques
- Chair massage
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Colonic hydrotherapy
- Hopi ear candles
- Hot-stone massage
- Hypnotherapy
- Indian head massage
- Kinesiology
- Manual lymphatic drainage
- Naturopathy
- Nutritional therapy
- Reflexology
- Reiki
- Shiatsu
- Sports and remedial massages, Swedish massage

Fitness and exercise

Gym membership discounts and offers at www.healthshieldperks.co.uk.

Online health assessment and personal coaching

Instant access to a range of health assessments and personal coaching tools.

Counselling fees

For example, psychiatric, psychological and bereavement. Up to 8 free sessions are available.



Cruse Bereavement Care is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies and work to enhance society's care of bereaved people.

Cruse offers face-to-face, telephone, email and website support with a freephone national helpline and local services, and a website (www.hopeagain.org.uk) specifically for children and young people. Their services are provided by a network of 5,000 trained volunteers and are confidential and free. Cruse also provides training and consultancy for external organisations and for those who may encounter bereaved people in the course of their work.

www.cruse.org.uk | 0808 808 1677



Relate have a network of Relate Centres across the UK and a group of licensed local counsellors that provide face-to-face counselling and support. Also provide phone, email and Live Chat counselling. Their relationship help pages offer practical tips, guides and videos to help people manage common relationship issues such as sex, separation and divorce, and parenting.

Services include:

- Relationship Counselling for individuals and couples
- Children and Young People's Counselling
- Marriage Care
- Mediation
- Family Counselling
- Sex Therapy

www.relate.org.uk



Citizens advice aim to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. They provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. They value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

Debt and money. Dealing with money issues can sometimes be off-putting, but if you don't understand how things like credit or mortgages work, you could end up losing out financially or getting yourself deep in debt. The CAB website provides information you need to make the right choices, including help to deal with your debt problems, how to avoid losing your home and how to get your finances back into shape.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk | www.cas.org.uk (Scotland)



Provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

When you're experiencing a mental health problem, supportive and reliable information can change your life.

That's what Mind do, empowering people to understand their condition and the choices available to them through:

- **Infoline offers callers confidential help for the price of a local call**
- **Legal Line provides information on mental health related law to the public, service users, family members/carers, mental health professionals and mental health advocates.**
- **Publications and website, now certified by the Information Standard.**

www.mind.org.uk | 0300 123 3393



Independent, confidential and free help for everyone in the veterinary community including veterinary nurses and students. This charity provides a 24/7 phone and email helpline; professional mental health support; financial assistance; information and resources.

Vetlife is an independent charity that provides free and confidential support to anyone in the UK veterinary community who has emotional, health or financial problems.

They fund and manage 3 support services in order to achieve this:

- **Vetlife Helpline**
- **Vetlife Health Support**
- **Vetlife Financial Support**

The charity is managed by a Board of 12 Directors who are all veterinary surgeons and understand the demands of the profession. It has existed for nearly 120 years during which time it has evolved constantly to meet the changing needs of the profession.

Today, the charity is providing more support than ever. In the last 3 years the number of confidential calls and emails to Vetlife Helpline has nearly tripled and Vetlife Health Support is now helping over 200 people.

www.vetlife.org.uk | 0303 040 2551

Every one of us goes through difficult periods during our lives, sometimes work related and sometimes not.

We'd like you to know that our door is always open for you if you'd like to talk. However, we understand you may want to talk to someone independent. Below are some numbers and websites that you may find useful.

Organisation	Telephone	Email	Website
Samaritans	116 123	jo@samaritans.org	www.samaritans.org
Vetlife Helpline (previously the Veterinary Benevolent Fund)	0303 040 2551	register online to send an anonymous email, or email info@vetlife.org.uk	www.vetlife.org.uk
Healthshield 24/7 employee assistance Counselling and support helpline	01270 588555 0800 028 1963*	* Please quote "Healthshield, VetPartners"	www.healthshield.co.uk
Alcoholics Anonymous	0800 917 7650	help@aamail.org	www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Anxiety	03444 775 774 text service: 07537 416 905	support@anxietyuk.org.uk	www.anxietyuk.org.uk
Beat	0808 801 0677	help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk	www.b-eat.co.uk (Online chat available via website)
National Centre for Eating Disorders	0845 838 2040		www.eating-disorders.org.uk
Cruse Bereavement support	0808 808 1677	helpline@cruse.org.uk	www.cruse.org.uk (Online chat available via website)
Citizens Advice England Wales Scotland	0800 144 8848 0800 702 2020 0800 028 1456	(Online chat available via website)	www.citizensadvice.org.uk Scotland: www.cas.org.uk
Refuge Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247		www.refuge.org.uk www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk (Online chat available via website)
Male Domestic abuse Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327	info@mensadviceline.org.uk	www.mensadviceline.org.uk (webchat available online)
Mind Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Information	0300 123 3393 text 86463	info@mind.org.uk	www.mind.org.uk
Narcotics anonymous	0300 999 1212		www.ukna.org
NHS Choices (Also your GP)			www.nhs.uk
Relate Relationship advice	0300 0030396	"talk to someone" link on website	www.relate.org.uk

For more information, you can contact the Wellbeing group at wellbeing@vetpartners.co.uk or find more information on VetNet

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If you are concerned about your wellbeing, or that of a colleague, please speak to your line manager, or someone in your workplace, the broader VetPartners team, or contact the relevant organisation detailed inside the booklet or on our toilet door poster. The important thing is to speak to someone.

