Take time for your mental health

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With May being Mental Health Awareness Month, now is a great time to think about the impact alcohol might be having on your mental health.

Alcohol and mental health issues are often closely linked because regular, heavy drinking interferes with the chemicals in your brain which are vital for good mental health.

If you regularly find yourself reaching for a drink when you are feeling stressed or low, the alcohol could be making you feel worse not better.

How alcohol affects our brain chemistry

Alcohol is a depressant, which means it can disrupt the delicate balance of chemicals and processes, affecting thoughts, feelings and actions – and sometimes long-term mental health. The more you drink, the bigger the impact on your brain function and the more likely it is to negatively impact your mental health.

This month, why not set aside some days to try something different, when you would previously have had a drink? **Any activity that releases endorphins will increase feelings of positivity and improve your mental wellbeing.**

Mental health issues are generally not something that can be solved overnight but taking positive actions like including more drink-free days into your week is a step in the right direction of looking after your mental health. **To keep track of your drink-free days and stay motivated why not download our free MyDrinkaware app!**

A few ideas to help improve mental wellbeing

Wild Swimming: Swimming outdoors in rivers, lakes or the sea can release endorphins and lower stress levels[1]. However, if you have never done this before it is very important to do research into where to swim and how to stay safe. We recommend checking out **OutdoorSwimmingSociety.com** to find out more.

Forest walking: This is a great way to get out into nature, relieve stress and get some exercise. If you go with family, you could think of some games to play on the way or, if you are alone, why not find a good playlist or podcast to listen to. We recommend checking out **Forestry England** for local routes near you.

Watch a comedy: Watching a good comedy with your favourite snacks has been proved to decrease stress hormone levels and blood pressure[2] making this an excellent way to help improve your mental health.

Get baking: Baking has a lot of potential to put you in a good mood and improve your mental health. If you don't want to bake for yourself, bake something for a friend. Baking a batch of cookies or muffins is a great way to show off your creative side!

References

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(1) https://www.lakedistricthotels.net/blog/26-reasons-wild-swimming/
(2) https://www.breobox.com/blogs/news/10-benefits-of-watching-movies