

# WAYS TO BEAT THE JANUARY BLUES



## NATURE

The Mind website states that there are a multitude of benefits to spending time in green space or bringing nature into your life, on both your mental and physical health. Growing things like flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can: improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, help you take time out and feel relaxed, help you be more active and as a result improve your physical health. It can also help you make new connections and provide peer support, although this needs to be practiced in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions. Blythe Valley Park has lots of footpaths, benches, and wildlife which can be explored. Have a walk, run or cycle around the park to see if being closer to nature helps you feel happier! See our previous Wellness at Work piece [here](#) which explains the benefits of Horticultural therapy.



## STAY ACTIVE

Research has shown that physical activity can improve mental health. It is suggested that it does this by way of improving our sleep and happier moods because of hormones that are released through exercise. Cortisol is also released through exercise, which helps us manage stress and relieve anxiety symptoms. Physical activity can also be a focus for our brain and be an effective coping mechanism. We have previously researched the benefits of exercising and the outdoors in our Wellness at Work piece from 2020 – click [here](#) for more information and resources.

Although we are now mostly #WFH, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic we also researched the benefits of Walking Meetings which can easily take place here at Blythe. Click [here](#) to find out more information – and bear it in mind as an option for physical activity when COVID restrictions ease, and when our work life returns to normal!

## SLEEP



The relationship with sleep and mental health can be a tough one to manage. Poor sleep can have a negative impact on our mental health and living with a mental illness can affect our sleep. Although there are many causes and reasons for poor sleep, there are some things we can do to try and tackle it. See our previous blog piece on “The Importance of Sleep” for more information and tips, [here](#).

## #WFH WELLNESS PRACTICES

The past year has been one of the most unsettling years and periods of uncertainty we have all experienced, and has seen a large majority of us transition to working from home. It is important that we continue to look after our physical and mental wellbeing as we work from home, and we can do this in a variety of ways. See our blog piece in which we have compiled useful practices such as breathing exercises and desk stretches that you can practice from home, [here](#) and also in [this](#) piece in which we share tips on how to help our wellness through breathing and brain exercises.



## MINDFUL CRAFTS

Research into Mindfulness has shown that crafting can be beneficial to our overall wellbeing. The Ellison website states that a crafting hobby can help achieve mindfulness in many ways: it enables us to focus on the moment; being creative releases dopamine, which is a natural anti-depressant; and is a break from technology. Crafting that involves repetition in its methods, such as sewing, can act as a great distraction from stress and make you calm. Also learning and developing crafting skills is great for wellbeing as it helps us set and achieve personal goals for your hobby, and helps maintain focus. According to a study published in The Journal of Neuropsychiatry (2011), crafting can have a positive impact on the brain, reducing the chance of developing mild cognitive impairment by 30%. If you're interested in taking up a new crafting hobby, why not check out [Mindful Crafts'](#) website? They are a small, family run craft business based in Solihull. They have a variety of Youtube tutorials – their most popular being the macramé heart wall hanging seen [here](#). If you give this a go – let us know via Instagram or twitter!

We'd love to see what you make and when COVID restrictions allow, we'd love to be able to hold Mindful Crafts workshops on site!



## STAY CONNECTED

The Mental Health Foundation advise that at times of stress, we work better in company and with support, and so recommends keeping in touch with family and friends by phone, email or social media. If you have access, software like Skype, Zoom, FaceTime and Houseparty allow us to stay connected in groups – so why not schedule regular group video calls with your family and/or friends? This could be just for a chat, or it could be a quiz night or a virtual book club! You could even arrange to watch a film on a streaming service together – then live-text or video call at the same time!

You could start with simply putting a reminder in your phone/work diary to respond to texts or call a family member to check in.

