



## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

October 10, 2021

THIS weekend marks World Mental Health Day (Sunday October 10) and it's important for members to know that they are never alone when dealing with personal issues and challenges.

Members must feel assured that it is always ok not to be ok, and we would encourage anyone going through a tough time to reach out and talk to someone, whether that be a friend, family member or a close colleague.

According to Healthy Ireland, this country has one of the highest rates (3/36 countries) of mental health illness such as anxiety, depression and alcohol abuse.

These statistics are known to vary. For instance, there is a higher prevalence of depression among adults over the age of 25, particularly when faced with challenging work environments.

As a staff association, it is at the very core of the GRA and its values to protect the wellbeing of our members.

There are many ways to protect and even help improve your mental health and wellbeing. Mental Health Ireland recommend taking five small steps on your path to better mental wellbeing.

**Connect:** Relationships with family, friends, colleagues and the wider community are vitally important, while building stronger, wider social connections can help one feel happier, more secure and a greater sense of purpose.

**Be Active:** Being active is good for your physical and mental wellbeing. Regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of wellbeing and lower rates of depression and anxiety. Physical activity can help change the chemicals in our brain which can result in a positive mood change. There is some evidence to suggest that exercise can bring about a sense of greater self-esteem, self-control and the ability to rise to a challenge.

Being active doesn't mean you need to train for a marathon. Find a physical activity that you enjoy and can fit into your daily/weekly routine. Just ten minutes of physical activity a day can make a difference to your mental wellbeing.

**Take Notice:** Pay attention to the present moment – to your own thoughts, feelings and the world around you can help improve your mental wellbeing. Self-awareness and knowing what makes you happy, sad, angry or excited are very important to look after yourself during the good and the not so good times. It can also help you notice 'trigger' signs of stress or anxiety and helps you prepare better coping mechanisms.

**Keep Learning:** Learning new skills can also positively affect your mental wellbeing as it can boost your confidence, self-esteem and can give each of us a greater sense of purpose. Learning something new

doesn't have to be daunting: start with something small that interests you, such as reading, learning a few words from a foreign language, discovering new social groups and even certain adult learning courses.

**Give:** Giving is good for others around you but it can also be very good for YOU. Giving of your time to others can be helpful and strengthen relationships or build new ones. A recent study by Volunteer Ireland found that 65% of respondents reported an increase in their self-esteem. But this doesn't necessarily mean that you must join a volunteer group to achieve this: simply helping colleagues or family members who are in need, or just thanking someone for something they did for you can help your personal wellbeing.

There are further tips on all five of these steps on the Mental Health Ireland website.

Members can always contact any GRA representative or their EAO (Employee Assistance Officer) for 100% confidential information on internal support on behalf of themselves or a colleague, while there are many external services and supports out there that anyone can access, including:

- Healthy Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland/>
- Mental Health Ireland: [https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/research/?gclid=CjwKCAjwkvWKBhB4EiwA-GHjFoVn8kHv5wgiTRVqklZoxqwdcWCgdeWDUsNcUJqOqsost\\_Y1DSfgPRoCMGMQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/research/?gclid=CjwKCAjwkvWKBhB4EiwA-GHjFoVn8kHv5wgiTRVqklZoxqwdcWCgdeWDUsNcUJqOqsost_Y1DSfgPRoCMGMQAvD_BwE)
- National Office For Suicide Prevention: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/>
- The Mental Health Commission: <https://www.mhcirl.ie/>
- Health Research Board: <https://www.hrb.ie/>
- Alcohol Action Ireland: <https://alcoholireland.ie/#>