



Ageing Well

Positive Ageing Toolkit - Module 5



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AGEING WELL

Ageing Well: Science based habits of people who age well

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Module 5: Practical tips for well-being and resilience in the elderly and caregivers

Section 1: Introduction: Importance of self-care for seniors

This section of the module is designed to provide senior citizens aged 65 and above with simple actions and practical advice to promote their wellbeing and resilience. It consists of five key actions, each accompanied by exercises and a quiz to reinforce the learning. By the end of the module, you will have a better understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, manage stress, and build strong social connections, ultimately enhancing your overall well-being and resilience.

The module will also provide a comprehensive resource guide to support you with contact information for local organizations, support groups, and health professionals. You are also encouraged to fill in a personalized well-being plan template to help you set goals, track progress, and make adjustments as needed.

WELLBEING PLAN TEMPLATE: <https://www.carepatron.com/files/wellness-plan.pdf>

1. Maintain a Balanced Diet

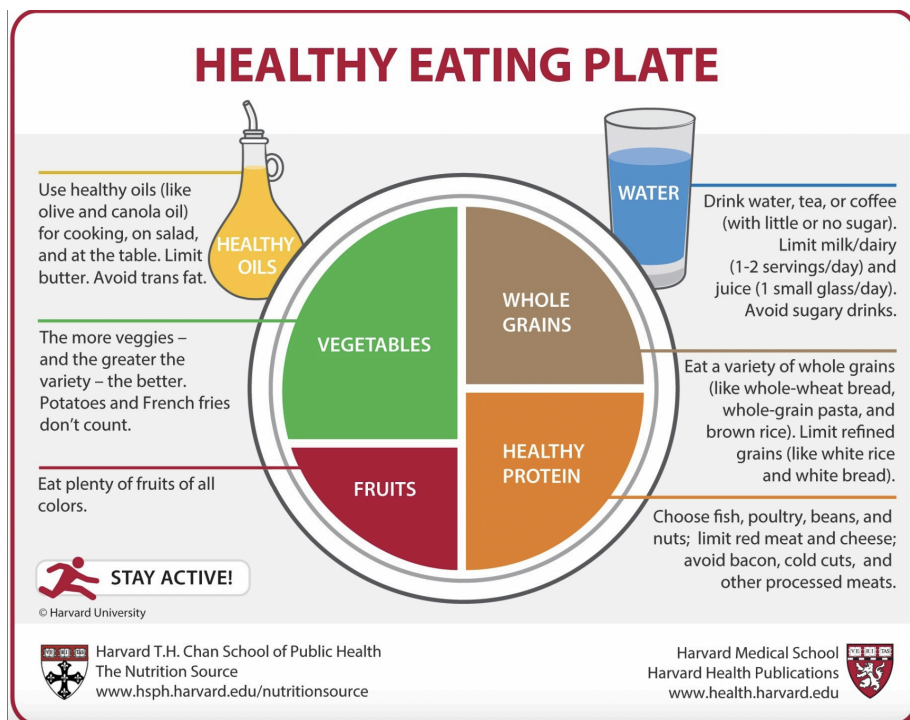
Benefits: A balanced diet is crucial for maintaining overall health and preventing age-related diseases.

Materials: Access to the internet, flipchart & post-it notes (optional)

Suggested time duration: 60 minutes

Activity: Read about how to prepare a healthy meal. Discuss with your health professional who might give more specific recommendations based on your needs and health condition. You might use the concept of a “Healthy Plate” prepared by skilled researchers and nutritionists.

TIP: Organise a workshop in your community center and invite a registered dietitian/nutritionist who will guide you through the process of creating a balanced meal plan.



2. Engage in Regular Physical Activity

Benefits: Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining physical and mental health in older adults.

Equipment/materials: safe quiet space indoor or outdoor, comfortable clothes, exercise mat, resistance bands

Suggested time duration: 30 minutes

Activity: Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily, such as walking, swimming, or yoga.

Example of Exercise Routine

1. Warm-Up: Gentle stretching (**5 minutes**).
2. Cardio: Brisk walking or marching in place (**10 minutes**).
3. Strength: Chair squats, bicep curls with light weights (**10 minutes**).
4. Balance: Standing on one leg, heel-to-toe walk (**10 minutes**).
5. Cool-Down: Deep breathing and stretching (**5 minutes**).



TIP: adjust the physical activity to your current physical condition. Listen to your body and don't workout over intense sensations of pain.

Source: canva.com

 Explore short videos here:

Gym/fitness for seniors

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NemLjfgy24>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIBsNXH4GW8>

Yoga for seniors

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ts01MC2mlo&t=3s>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZvmKOPoFVo>

3. Meditation and gratitude

Benefits: Deep breathing, body scans and guided meditations support mental and emotional health and positive attitude.

Equipment/materials: Comfortable seating, audio for guided meditation.



Source: canva.com

Suggested time duration: 10 minutes daily

Activity 1: Practice Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation can help reduce stress, improve focus, and promote a sense of calm and wellbeing. Simple exercises like deep breathing, body scans, and guided meditations can be easily incorporated into daily routines. Set aside 5-10 minutes each day for a mindfulness practice. Find a quiet and comfortable space, and focus on your breath or a calming mantra.

Activity 2: Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude

Expressing gratitude has been shown to improve overall wellbeing and life satisfaction. Make a conscious effort to appreciate the small joys and blessings in your life. Start a gratitude journal and write down three things you are grateful for each day. Reflect on the positive aspects of your life and the people who bring you joy.

You can follow the instructions in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6rXVM8VIWc&t=1s>

4. Foster social connections

Benefits: Strong social connections are essential for emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Volunteer Work: Volunteer in your community, find an opportunity to contribute to a cause you care about while interacting with others. You may contact a representative from a local volunteer organization and ask for information on available opportunities and guidance through the process of finding a suitable volunteer role.

Social Events: Research local social events, such as community gatherings or cultural festivals, where you can meet new people and engage in social activities. Ask your community liaison to provide a calendar of upcoming events and offer tips on how to make the most of social interactions.

Further tools and resources for continuous improvement of well-being

Materials/Equipment: Tablets or smartphones, internet access.

Explore various digital apps and websites. Here are a few examples:

- Apps: Calm, Headspace for meditation; MyFitnessPal for nutrition tracking.
- Websites: National Institute on Ageing, <https://www.vscm.selfhelp.net/>, <https://seniorplanet.org/>
- Resources: Senior centers, community classes, support groups.



Source: canva.com

Section 2: Simple actions and practical tips to promote wellbeing and resilience in the caregivers

Introduction: Importance of self-care for caregivers

A caregiver is a person who provides physical or psychological care to someone else. Caregivers help others who aren't able to help themselves fully on their own including helping elderly. Taking care of an elderly person, whether you are an informal or professional caregiver can be rewarding, but also very tiring.

Informal caregivers are individuals voluntarily caring for a relative or a friend. Across the literature and in the media, it is widely accepted that being an informal caregiver puts a person at risk of poorer mental and physical health and puts the individual under stress. **Formal/professional caregivers** for elderly are also at high risk of mental, emotional, physical and professional exhaustion.



Source: canva.com

Stressed caregivers may experience fatigue, anxiety and depression. You can reduce your risk of exhaustion or even burnout by introducing regular activities supporting your wellbeing and building resilience. Simply put: **“One cannot pour from an empty cup”**.

Below you will find a few tips and activities that you can incorporate into your daily or weekly schedule. Try them, observe how they make you feel. Choose which ones work for you and try to practice them regularly.

SELF-CARE TIPS		
REGULARITY	REALISTIC	INTERCONNECTED
Building resilience is like building a muscle. You need to practice regularly to see the impact on your wellbeing and life.	Set realistic goals and expectations. Start with small steps, a few minutes every day.	Physical, mental and emotional pillars of wellbeing are interconnected. Stretching the body in the fresh air will positively affect your body, mind and mood.

1. Brisk walk in the fresh air

Benefits: physical, mental, emotional health

Equipment/materials: safe space to walk outside (preferably in a green area), comfortable walking shoes

Suggested time duration: start with 10 min a day, extend to 20 - 30 min a day or 150 min a week spread among the days as your schedule allows.

Research has shown that walking at a brisk pace at least 150 minutes a week can help you:

- Think better, feel better and sleep better.
- Reduce your risk of serious diseases like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and several types of cancer.
- Improve your blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels.
- Increase your energy and stamina.
- Improve your mental and emotional wellbeing and reduce your risk of depression.
- Improve memory and reduce your risk of dementia.
- Boost bone strength and reduce your risk of osteoporosis.
- Prevent weight gain.

If 150 minutes sounds like a lot, remember that even short activity sessions can be added up over the week to reach this goal. Try to fit in a few minutes of walking several times a day. This could be 10 minutes of brisk walking after breakfast, lunch and dinner.



TIP 1: Find a walking buddy/friend, set walking sessions together and encourage each other.

TIP 2: Any other type of regular physical activity that brings you joy is also very beneficial for your overall wellbeing. Try cycling, swimming or dancing.

2. 10 min mindful stretch/yoga

Benefits: physical, mental, emotional health

Equipment/materials: safe quiet space indoor or outdoor, comfortable clothes, exercise mat or carpet (optional)


Suggested time duration: 10 min, 3 - 5 times a week

Regular physical activity helps you avoid or control chronic health issues, releases endorphins—hormones that improve mood, boost energy, and promote better sleep.

Try to perform this activity like a form of meditation. Focus on your movements and your breathing. Observe the sensations that arise in the body as you stretch. Regulate and adjust the movements to your momentary physical and mental state. It's OK to feel the body when stretching, some discomfort is healthy. But don't push over intense sensations like burning or pinching pain or if you realize your breath doesn't flow freely. Mindful stretching practices help you live in the present moment.



Picture Resource: canva.com

 Here are a few suggested standing stretches you can do anywhere. You can also explore short yoga videos below:

10 Minute Stretching - FULL BODY -Stress Relief & Recovery:

<https://youtu.be/hNCqIgl7Pjc?si=ijT7jLe3gHPZkeLh>

10 min Full Body Stretch 1: https://youtu.be/EvF_Jnf9jwg?si=JHVMDmlrQf8QL4fo

10 Minute Full Body Stretch 2: <https://youtu.be/lxuTCHJSers?si=0DQ7xPmrAuXMIEVl>

3. Relaxation breathing: five finger breath (tracing fingers breath)

Benefits: physical, mental, emotional health

Equipment/materials: none, it can be performed anytime anywhere

Suggested time duration: 2 - 4 min, one or multiple times a day

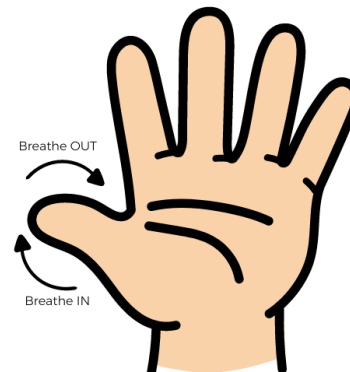
Daily deep breathing exercise can lower resting blood pressure and reduce stress and anxiety. The advantage is that it can be performed virtually anywhere without any equipment required. Scientists also found that **longer exhalation** than inhalation stimulates the part of the nervous system that counter fights the stress response and calms the body and mind.

Note: With breathing exercises it's normal if you feel a bit dizzy especially in the beginning. With regular exercise your body and mind will adjust. However if feelings of dizziness or other discomfort continue, stop the exercise, possibly adjust the length and intensity of breathing or move to another activity.

Instructions:


Step 1: Start by standing or sitting tall with feet planted on the ground or crossed at the ankles (whichever feels most comfortable). Take a few deep breaths through your nose and then exhale out through your mouth.

Step 2: Once you're settled into the rhythm of your breath, use your index finger to trace the outline of each finger on the opposite hand. On the in-breath, trace up the outside of your left thumb with your right index finger. On the out-breath, trace down the other side. The goal is to match the movement with your breath.



Source: canva.com

Step 3: Keep tracing until you reach your pinky finger before starting over again with your pointer finger; then repeat several times until you feel settled into a relaxed state. Notice how you feel afterwards.

 You can follow the instructions in this video:

<https://youtu.be/03q1HD-MGoo?si=gfnLgJk0hpZ9lpn>

Asking for help

Being a caregiver is a demanding job. If feelings of physical or mental exhaustion, troubles sleeping, sadness or anxiety prevail for several weeks, it might be a signal you need rest and help from others. It might be a good idea to make a list of people you can turn to for help. Start with a list of friends and family, find support groups in your area or online and add contacts to professionals like coaches, therapists and crisis intervention call centers. You don't need to do it alone. **It's OK to ask for help.**

Here are some links to organizations and support groups:

<https://www.agingcare.com/caregiver-forum>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/113354218750970/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CaregiversConnect/>



Source: freepik.com

Quiz

1. Which of the following is a sign of malnutrition in older adults?

- A. Unintentional weight loss
- B. Increased appetite
- C. Improved skin health

2. How much exercise is recommended daily for seniors?

- A. 10 minutes
- B. 20 minutes
- C. 30 minutes

3. Which pillar of wellbeing is positively affected by physical activity?

- A. Physical health
- B. Mental and emotional health
- C. Physical, mental and emotional health

4. What breathing pattern calms the body and mind?

- A. Longer exhalation, shorter inhalation
- B. Longer inhalation, shorter exhalation
- C. Short inhalation and exhalation

*Correct answers: 1-A, 2-C, 3-C, 4-A



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Consortium



e-Seniors

Promoting digital literacy and social inclusion for seniors, e-Seniors focuses on integrating older adults into the digital age, reducing social isolation, and enhancing their quality of life.



The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

The voice for non-formal adult education in Europe, advocating for lifelong learning opportunities and supporting initiatives that foster active citizenship and personal development among adults.



Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)

A leading research and development organization in Cyprus, specialising in educational technology, innovation, and capacity building. They are committed to fostering effective learning environments and supporting digital skills development



Elliniki Etaireia thetikis Psychologias – The Hellenic Association of Positive Psychology (HAPPSY)

Dedicated to advancing the principles of positive psychology in Greece, promoting mental well-being, resilience, and positive aging through research, education, and community engagement.



Instituto para el Fomento del Desarrollo y la Formación si (Infodef)

A Spanish organization focused on developing and implementing innovative educational and training programmes. Their work emphasises social inclusion, entrepreneurship, and the empowerment of vulnerable groups.



Neophytos ch Charalambous – Institute of Development Ltd (IoD Ltd)

Based in Cyprus, IoD is committed to promoting sustainable development through education, research, and social innovation. Their projects aim to empower individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.



SEMwell a Motion Digital s.r.o. (SEMwell)

Specialises in creating digital solutions and interactive tools to enhance education and well-being. They focus on leveraging technology to support lifelong learning and positive ageing.



Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung – Swiss Association for Continuing Education (SVEB)

The national umbrella organization for adult education in Switzerland, promoting the importance of continuing education and advocating for high-quality learning opportunities for adults at all stages of life.

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