



# Positive Wellbeing Following Redundancy

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It is recognised that being made redundant is likely to be in the top ten most stressful events that can happen throughout your life. However it can also be seen as an opportunity for change, a chance to re-evaluate what is important to you, and what direction your career might take in the future. Most of us will be made redundant more than twice in our working life, although right now that won't feel like any consolation to you. Being a statistic doesn't help. This is real for you right now.

The most important element to being made redundant is that you preserve your self confidence, however hard that might feel. The situation you are in now is not your fault. Remember that. This was not within your control. Your friends and family are likely to be able help you stay positive. They know your strengths and value you whether you are at work or not. Human dignity is not defined solely by our ability to work and be employed, but it is a big part of life. But that's hard to do when you are experiencing all kinds of emotions: shock, grief, loss. If you have been in your job for a significant time, then it is natural to struggle when that job is taken away from you, especially when this wasn't your choice.

In situations like ours here in Teesside, the closure of our core industries is devastating. Devastating to those who worked there, the supply businesses affected, contractors laid off, and thousands of families across our community. This continuing situation doesn't help in staying positive.

Acknowledging the emotional impact of sudden redundancy is the first step in looking after our wellbeing. Knowing that many friends and colleagues are in the same situation may make you feel worse, but also there is camaraderie in knowing that you are there for one another.

There will be plenty of people that you can speak to in the weeks and months to come who can offer practical support, advice and guidance, about what new opportunities you might consider, even though looking for a new job may feel like a step too far. Stick with it, because there will be new opportunities on the horizon, although they may challenge you and be different to what you are used to.

## Looking After Your Mental Health

Some people call mental health 'emotional health' or 'wellbeing' and it is just as important as good physical health. It doesn't matter what you call it. The important thing is that you look after it!

We all have times when we feel down or stressed or frightened. Most of the time those feelings pass. But sometimes they develop into a more serious problem that doesn't go away easily. This could happen to any one of us.

Everyone is different. You may bounce back from a setback while someone else may feel weighed down by it for a long time. Your mental health doesn't always stay the same. It can change as circumstances change and as you move through different stages of your life.

Some people think there's still a stigma attached to mental health problems, although this has changed a lot in recent years. Although we're talking more about how we feel, some people can find it uncomfortable to acknowledge anxiety and depression and don't talk about them much. Many people don't even feel comfortable talking about their feelings at all. But it's healthy to know and say how you're feeling, especially at times like this.

Right now, you will be going through all kinds of feelings: shock, anger, despair, fear for the future – these are just some of the things you may be feeling. All of these feelings are perfectly natural. Everyone is different and will work through their feelings at a different pace. It's when those feelings go on for a long time that you may need help to work through them.

**There's no magic solution to redundancy. You may feel as though everything you have known has been taken away right now. But, glib as it sounds, tomorrow really IS another day.**

**You will find another future, albeit different. But you are a valuable human being with lots of skills. Remember that!**

**We are here for us if you need us [www.rcmind.org](http://www.rcmind.org)**

# Top Tips to being mentally healthy

We don't want to patronise you by our advice here, so please take it in the spirit that's it's offered and use the bits that can help you at this point in time.

## 1. Keep talking

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled. Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy. Talking can be a way to cope with a problem you've been carrying around in your head for a while. Just being listened to can help you feel supported and less alone. And it works both ways. If you open up, it might encourage others to do the same.

## 2. Keep in touch

Strong family ties and supportive friends can help you deal with the stresses of life. Friends and family can make you feel included and cared for. They can offer different views from whatever's going on inside your own head. They can help keep you active, keep you grounded and help you solve practical problems. There's nothing better than catching up with someone face-to-face. But that's not always possible. Give them a call, drop them a note or chat to them online instead. Keep the lines of communication open. It's good for you!

Not everyone has family around them for lots of reasons. Don't beat yourself up about your relationships at this point in time. Surround yourself with positive people who can be there for you and understand you well.

## 3. Ask for help

None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things go wrong. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear. It's quite OK to say "no" when people make demands of you. You just need to be polite and firm.

#### **4. Allow yourself space**

In the aftermath of losing your job there is usually a very busy time: filling in lots of forms, working out how to pay your bills, telling your loved ones about your situation, and then endless job applications. Often you will apply for things that you don't really want to do, but if successful, the right job will fill an immediate gap and give you breathing space for a little while. All your career aspirations may seem irrelevant as you consider what available vacancies are out there.

During this time try to take a few minutes for yourself every day. Turn your phone off. Go for a walk. Or just close your eyes and take time out. You could practice "Mindfulness" which is a well known way of reconnecting with yourself, paying more attention to the present moment to help you connect with your thoughts and feelings. You can find out more here:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness)

#### **5. Keep active**

Experts believe exercise releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good. Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and help you concentrate, sleep, look and feel better. Exercise also keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy. Exercising doesn't just mean doing sport or going to the gym. Walking the dog, gardening or housework can also keep you active. Try to make physical activity that you enjoy a part of your day.

And on the days when the experts don't quite do it for you, it's enough to get dressed, walk downstairs, make yourself a brew and acknowledge that achievement. Feel free to go back to bed if you need to...

#### **6. Eat well**

There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel – for example, caffeine and sugar can have an immediate effect. But food can also have a long-lasting effect on your mental health. Your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

At times of stress, most of us resort to eating fast foods, foods full of fats and carbohydrates, and things that need no effort. Some choices are easier than others when we're feeling demotivated and short of time. We've all done it, and then feel worse afterwards.

Here's some good lazy choices for the times you really can't be bothered:

- A glass of milk
- A piece of fruit
- Eggs, in any form (even fried if needs must!)
- A bacon butty with lean bacon, brown bread, and only a scrape of butter!
- A bowl of porridge or cereal
- plenty of water.

And when you're feeling motivated, try to have:

- lots of different types of fruit and vegetables
- wholegrain cereals or bread;
- nuts and seeds
- dairy products
- oily fish

A healthy balanced diet means eating two to three meals each day and drinking a lot of fluids, though not too much alcohol. Try to limit how many high-caffeine or sugary drinks you have.

## **7. Drink sensibly**

Many of us drink for pleasure. It's a sociable activity and often helps us relax. Alcohol is a relaxant that helps us wind down from the pressures of our daily lives. But sometimes alcohol can be something to mask what we are feeling, good or bad. Some people drink to deal with a whole raft of emotions including fear or loneliness, but the effect is only temporary. When the drink wears off, you feel worse because of the way alcohol withdrawal symptoms affect your brain and the rest of your body.

Drinking is not the best way to manage difficult feelings because it is a known depressant. But the majority of us like it. That's OK at safe levels but it's also habit forming.

When you suddenly have a lot of time on your hands, it's tempting to fill that time with others in a similar situation, "meeting up for a pint". The problem starts when "a few pints" turns into 8 or 10, on a regular basis. Occasional light drinking is perfectly healthy and enjoyable for most people.

Some people smoke or use drugs or other substances to change how they feel. But, again, the effects are short-lived. Just like alcohol, the more you use, the more you crave. Nicotine and drugs don't deal with the causes of difficult feelings. They don't solve problems, but they can create them. Be careful.

## **8. Take a break**

A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you. Give yourself some 'me time'. Taking a break may mean being very active. It may mean not doing very much at all. Listen to your body. If you're really tired, give yourself time to sleep. Without good sleep, our mental health suffers and our concentration goes downhill. Sometimes the world can wait.

## **9. Do something you're good at**

What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself helps beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it and achieving something boosts your self-esteem. Concentrating on a hobby like gardening or the crossword can help you forget your worries for a while and change your mood. It can be good to have an interest where you're not seen as someone's mum or dad, partner or colleague.

You're just you. An hour of sketching lets you express yourself creatively. A morning on the football pitch gets you active and gives you the chance to meet new people.

## 10. Accept who you are

Some of us make people laugh, some are good at quizzes or DIY, others cook fantastic meals. Others all rounders, but whatever our skills and talents, we are who we are. Some of us share our lifestyle with the people who live close to us, others live very differently. We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places and make new friends. Good self-esteem helps you cope when life takes a difficult turn. Be proud of who you are. Recognise and accept what you are not good at, but focus on what you do well. Work out if there's anything that you still want to change. Are your expectations realistic? If they are, work towards the change in small steps.

## Help is at hand

**There are lots of services available to help you at this time...**

### **Redcar & Cleveland Mind**

Find someone to help you deal with your feelings and help you in moving forward – you can access the support of a Mental Health Practitioner or join our Peer Support Group.

Contact us at **Redcar & Cleveland Mind** on **01642 296052**, visit our website [www.rcmind.org](http://www.rcmind.org) or email [mhp@rcmind.org](mailto:mhp@rcmind.org) to speak to a Mental Health Practitioner.

*We are open to your suggestions about what support you need. If you feel a support group would be helpful, we can facilitate this. We also have a number of short courses you can access, as well as one-to-one therapeutic support.*

### **Step Forward Tees Valley**

This programme is specifically designed for those of you wanting to get back into employment. A team of trained "Navigators" will help you find your way back into employment or training. If you have additional health needs, **Redcar & Cleveland**



**Mind** have two Health Link Workers who will help you to step back into work by helping you tackle any barriers that may be standing in your way.

You can find out more by calling us on 01642 681785 or visiting <https://www.sfteesvalley.co.uk/gettingstartedredcar>

### **Visit your GP**

You should consider getting help from your GP if difficult feelings are:

- stopping you getting on with life;
- having a big impact on the people you live with; or
- affecting your mood over several weeks.

Over a third of visits to GPs are about mental health. Your GP may suggest ways you or your family can help you. Or they may refer you to a specialist or another part of the health service, like Talking Therapies. All local doctors have access to teams of professionals and support staff offering a range of skills and different ways to help.

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

For advice on debt or finance:

Citizens Advice Bureau can help advise on debt, finance and welfare rights. Contact **03 444 111 444** for the Adviceline or **0808 808 2228** for Debt Advice (9am - 8pm Monday to Friday and 9.30am - 1pm Saturdays)

Redcar & Cleveland CAB can be contacted on: **01287 203324 (office)** or visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/redcar-cleveland](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/redcar-cleveland) for information about locations where you can access support across the borough.

**Samaritans** provides emotional support for people who are experiencing distress or despair. For confidential support, call **08457 90 90 90** (local rate) 24 hours a day

For general health information and advice: You can contact **NHS England** 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for information about health-related issues. Information is available in a wide range of languages. Phone: **111**