DAY 5: What is behaviour change? And have you had your free NHS health check

Hello again,

How are you feeling on Day 5 of your challenge? You now have the support of a local community all committed to improving the health and happiness of their future selves. What an amazing thing to be a part of!

Today, we are thinking about what behaviour change is. Behaviour change has been a bit of a buzz phrase in public health in recent years, it refers to the process of changing the actions, habits or attitudes of a person or group. Often this is with the aim of promoting health. There are various **theories of behaviour** which highlight key aspects that are important for changing our behaviour. These include our capability, opportunity and motivation:

- Capability includes both physical ability to do the behaviour and the mental ability meaning knowledge and understanding as to how and why.
- Opportunity refers to the time, environment, resources and social support to actually do the behaviour.
- Motivation considers the internal processes (including plans, evaluation and impulses) that energise and direct behaviour.

Whilst this is interesting to consider when looking at your own behaviour and potential challenges in reliably committing to a healthy behaviour, it's worth saying that small things really add up! Behaviour change isn't about marathon running - having slightly smaller portions everyday or doing a small amount of manageable exercise or reducing the sugar in your tea by half a spoon - it's not all or nothing, it's about moving the dial in the right direction. For more information on behaviour change theory, see this presentation on the UCL website.

As always, we have some brilliant advice and tips across our five areas of focus to share with you, so let's crack on…

Summary:

- **Vitamin B12** plays a big role in keeping our bodies and brains functioning well. Older adults may benefit from eating B12-rich foods like eggs, dairy, oily fish and fortified cereals, while staying alert to symptoms such as tiredness, memory issues or balance problems.
- Hydration remains a major theme, as dehydration becomes easier to miss and more harmful with age; recognising **symptoms like dark pee, dizziness, tiredness or a dry mouth**, and drinking water little and often throughout the day, can prevent serious health issues.

- **Build physical activity into everyday routines;** walking instead of driving or squatting whilst you boil the kettle - think of ways to build movement into routine.
- Social connection looks different for everyone, but even those who prefer solitude benefit from some daily interaction; friendly local groups and warm community spaces offer low-pressure opportunities to meet others and strengthen social networks that support wellbeing. **Links to various groups in the connect and engage section below.**
- Keeping the brain active through **puzzles, games and group activities** helps maintain thinking skills, and **local libraries offer in-person games sessions and borrowable puzzles.**
- Make sure you get your **NHS health check**.

For more information...

Eat

Today we are focusing on the importance of **vitamin B12**. This lesser known but essential vitamin is vital for making DNA and red blood cells as well as maintaining nerve and brain function, keeping up energy levels and contributing to mood. Phew - all big jobs! Older adults can be at risk of B12 deficiency for several reasons; changes to stomach acid as we age can make it harder to release B12 from foods and certain medications such as metformin can make absorption difficult. Eating plenty of vitamin B12 rich foods is therefore a good idea – good sources are **eggs, dairy products, fish such as mackerel, salmon and sardines and fortified cereals and plant milks**. Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency include tiredness, memory problems, balance issues and mood changes.

Drink

You'll be hearing lots about hydration throughout our time together. On day 1, we shared why the risk of becoming dehydrated increases as we age. If we don't know how to spot dehydration, it can get worse and cause major health problems.

According to NHS advice, symptoms of dehydration are:

- feeling thirsty
- dark yellow, strong-smelling pee
- peeing less often than usual
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling tired

- a dry mouth, lips and tongue
- sunken eyes

Keep vigilant and if you notice any of these symptoms, you need to drink more water. The best way to keep hydrated is to drink water, little and often throughout the day. Here at Take 5 HQ, we like to keep a water bottle with us all day to make sure we don't forget to drink when we're busy.

Move

Movement is possibly the one single biggest thing we can do to contribute to our long term health and wellbeing and as the NHS lists it has huge benefits. There are so so many perks of moving our bodies – from mood to muscle, reduced risk of chronic disease to stress relief and resilience against frailty. There are also many ways to move but it is very easy to sit still. Our tip today is to build movement into your **routine** – it might be light jogging on the spot whilst the kettle boils, walking to the corner shop rather than driving or attending a weekly class – anything that can build regular movement into your day, week, month and year! So, grab a pen and paper and jot down some regular things you do and how you could make movement part of them.

Connect and Engage

We know that some people seek out social connection more than others. You may be someone that prefers time alone and finds social get togethers stressful or tiring. We understand; the Take Five team has a mix of people and some of us much prefer solitude with a book or just time alone to think. However, it's good to build in some socialising into each day - it is important for our brain health and our social network can be a great support in tough times. So, if you are someone that avoids time with others, take a moment to consider how you might change your behaviour thinking about your motivation, capability and opportunity? As ever, we are here to help and have listed some particularly friendly and welcoming local social spaces to meet others:

- Charville Community Centre Older people group
- Uxbridge Community Centre Older people Group (Tuesdays)

Think

Fun and games! We have some keen puzzlers and board gamers on team Take 5 and aside from being a fun pastime, completing a jigsaw helps us to engage our analytical and intuitive skills and board games can help give the brain a flex.

With this in mind, why not try an in-person board games or crossword group at your local library.

Uxbridge library also has puzzles and games to borrow so you could take one home and challenge a friend or neighbour to join you.

Tip of the day!

Did you know you might be entitled to a **health check**? In the same way we take our cars for an MOT, our bodies need checkups too – particularly as we age. That's why everyone, from the age of 40-74 years, that doesn't already have a long term condition, is eligible to regular NHS health checks. This is conducted through your GP surgery and provides an opportunity to look at aspects of your health including heart health, lifestyle and diabetes risk. Every year these health checks pick up previously undiagnosed conditions and enable people to start managing them to avoid poorer outcomes. If you haven't had a health check recently, or ever, ask your GP today!

When you next hear from us, you'll have reached an important milestone – a whole week of changing the way you age! Have a great few days in the meantime.

Bye for now,

Team Take 5

Reminder: This information is general guidance and if you have any concerns over your own health please speak to your medical professional.