

The LifeSIGNS little book of five a days



SIGNS
Self-Injury Guidance & Network Support



A free ebook about health and happiness

Your five a day, every day

work Support

"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Will Durant, after Aristotle

We become what we do often.

If we get into arguments every day, we become argumentative, perhaps even combative.

If we make something every day, we become creative.

If we're kind to people, we become kind.

It's a good idea then, to be kind to yourself. It's a good idea to regularly do things that you enjoy, or that reduce your stress, or that enhance your positivity.

This little book is for viewing on your computer or mobile device. Each page is written by a different person at LifeSIGNS. We want to share some ideas with you, because we know how hard the struggle can be when it comes to anxiety, depression, self-injury and sadness.

So, flick through our little book and see if there are some ideas that you can adapt and make work for you - every day.



Five a day for mental health

You can seek a little extra health and happiness in body and mind if you make time for yourself and have the right support.

- 1) **Do something creative:** make something today that you can look back on and think to yourself '*I made that*'. You might enjoy recording your singing or dancing, or maybe you like drawing or scrapbooking. Make it the best you can and don't stay hung up on perfection - it'll keep you busy and give you something to be proud of afterwards.
- 2) **Drink more:** no, not alcohol! Water, low-sugar fruit juice, or find your favourite fruit or herbal tea. Did you know 'normal' tea comes in green, white, black, oolong and assam varieties? Good hydration makes you so much more awake and can help you feel revitalised!
- 3) **Make a list of your goals:** write out all the things you want to do in your life. These could be as big or as small as you like. Whenever you're feeling down take a look at this list and think to yourself 'look at all this awesome stuff I still need to make a reality!' and add a few more.
- 4) **Exercise:** you need to find something that you will enjoy, as after all, if you don't enjoy something, you won't keep it up. Exercise releases endorphins (happy brain juice) which makes you naturally happier, and of course there are the obvious health benefits as only thirty minutes of exercise a day can improve your mood, sleep quality, brain power, attention span, social life and overall happiness! Certainly worth a go.
- 5) **Speak to someone you love:** make sure you talk to someone who means a lot to you at least once a day. Just chatting can make you feel lots better and will keep you in touch with what's going on with them. Call, text, video chat - whatever you two like doing. Even if you're stuck in your room for the day, make them your contact with the outside world.

Emmie

Taking care of yourself doesn't need lots of time or lots of money, it's just about prioritising yourself for a few minutes.

Emmie looks after our YouTube channel; check out our videos and subscribe at <http://youtube.lifesigns.org.uk>

Five a day for progress

There's something very empowering about choices, and *recognising* our choices even when things feel tough. Planning is a great way to exercise our choices and develop our hope and ambition.

- 1) **Do one thing you enjoy every day:** hang out with a friend; if you have a pet then cuddle them. Go for a walk. Relax and watch a favourite movie. Curl up on the couch and read a good book. The point is to give your life some meaning, even on the days when all you want to do is crawl under the covers in bed and hide!
- 2) **Have a vacation!** And no you do not have to be on holiday for this. Spend some time looking after you. Relax. Turn your phone off for a few hours. Just be with yourself and not worrying about the stressors that life can bring.
- 3) **Talk to people:** even if you do not know them. The laughter and conversation may help you and them to smile today. You never know the value of the connections you make, so be brave and reach out.
- 4) **Goals. Goals. Goals!** What do you want to achieve in life? Pick one or two goals you have and break the goals up into small steps. Steps you can tick off once you have completed them. You will soon realise that no goal is too big or far away to reach. You can succeed in anything you put your mind to!
- 5) **Be kind to yourself:** don't judge yourself for anything you do. Judgements only bring you down, make you feel like you '*aren't good enough*' or have '*failed*' in some way. This is not helpful. Acknowledge when you have done something right and reward yourself.

Lauren

Make a little progress each day and you'll create magnificent changes in your life.

If you struggle with self-injury, consider your choices:

<http://www.lifesigns.org.uk/what/choice>

Lauren looks after our self-injury Support Forum over at

www.lifesigns.org.uk/forum





Five a day for fulfillment

We are social creatures, even if we can feel awkward and unsure around people; connecting with individuals and with the natural world can be very fulfilling - and it's always fun to have a giggle with a friend.

- 1) **Get in touch with someone:** whether someone you know well or not, connecting with someone every day as a matter of routine can help a great deal. Phone, text, email, Skype or meeting up with them, or even just talking on Facebook or Twitter - try not to allow yourself to become too isolated.
- 2) **Step outside:** touching base with nature is hugely beneficial. If for any reason you are unable to physically get outside, open a window and get some fresh air and just take a good look around outside. Give your mind a rest each day by focusing on your surroundings.
- 3) **Eat well:** this doesn't necessarily mean living off fruit and vegetables and never eating the treats you enjoy. Just taking one small step each week to improve your diet can make a difference to how you feel mentally and emotionally.
- 4) **Focus:** it doesn't matter if the focus is on work or on a hobby, having something specific to work towards during the day gives you something outside of your own mind to think about.
- 5) **Laugh:** find something to giggle about each day. Laughter is good for you physically as well as mentally!

Laura

You don't want to overwhelm yourself with 'things to do' or too many choices; rest is just as important as focus.

Laura runs our blog, and we publish four or five articles each month, check out our thoughts at <http://blog.lifesigns.org.uk>

You won't know if you don't try –
why be stuck in old ways when you
can take control and have a go?



A key to happiness is to seek the little
pieces of joy that can be found in
most things every day – every day.



Five a day for contentment

Live life on purpose and make your own decisions; empower yourself to act with integrity - be at peace with yourself, and others.

- 1) **Start a gratitude journal:** at the end of each day write down the positives that have happened, however big or small. Sometimes it can be easy to lose sight of the positives in your life when you feel things are not going so well, but having them written down helps you to remember that there is good in each day and it's great looking back on them all when your book is finished.
- 2) **Drink more water:** water is great for helping you feel more refreshed and it is great for your body and health too. Try switching at least one of your caffeinated drinks each day for water and you'll start to notice the benefits.
- 3) **Try to get the amount of sleep you need:** some people need less than the 'usual 8 hours' and some need more but, whatever it is you need to feel well rested, plan your evening so you can get to bed at a good time. Not getting enough sleep can leave you feeling drained and more stressed which can build up over time.
- 4) **Speak to a family member or friend:** actually speak to them face to face or call them, not over Facebook, not through an email or a text. Take five minutes to share stuff about your day and let them share their thoughts. It's good to stay connected with the people in your life.
- 5) **Take time out of your day to go for a little walk:** even if it's just for 20 minutes on your lunch break. Aside from the health benefits, it breaks your day up a little and gives you time to clear your head before getting on with the rest of your day.

Ash

Self-expression helps your mind 'finish thoughts' and move on. It's also good to have a record of your progress.

Ash looks after our (very active) Facebook Page; come join us at <http://facebook.lifesigns.org.uk>



Five a day for inner peace

Live life on purpose and make your own decisions; empower yourself to act with integrity - be at peace with yourself, and others.

- 1) **Take pleasure in the small things:** the world is a beautiful and amazing place, so take the time to enjoy the small pleasures it offers every day. Whether people watching in a busy city, or quietly watching a bee gathering pollen, such pleasures are free and can be found anywhere. So slow down occasionally, stop and truly see what's around you.
- 2) **Meditate:** meditation can set you up for the day, releasing negative energy, calming both the body and mind, and enabling / empowering a desired emotional response to any situation. There are various techniques to choose from, and while meditation takes time and practise to learn, there are benefits to be gained from the outset, even if you're simply sitting quietly reflecting for a few minutes.
- 3) **Do something different:** routine can be comforting, but a change can be invigorating and inspiring. Walk a different route, shop at a different supermarket, listen to a different genre of music, try a different food, say *no*, say *yes*. There's a whole world of experiences and opportunities out there just waiting to be discovered, so don't limit yourself by sticking only to the things you know. Try something a little different and see where it takes you.
- 4) **Learn something new:** the human brain craves knowledge, so feed it daily to prevent it from becoming bored and lethargic. Learn a new word; learn how to recognise a tree by its leaves; learn how to cook a new dish; learn something about another country. The options are infinite. You might prefer to learn a single thing each day, or you might prefer to spend days, weeks or months learning a little more each day about a wider subject that interests you. But don't limit yourself to your current work or studies - branch out, challenge your mind, and learn new things.
- 5) **Take responsibility and forgive yourself:** at the end of each evening you don't want to be carrying the burdens of the day to bed with you, and on to the next day. Instead, spend some time reflecting on the day's events. Recognise your achievements, however small, and congratulate yourself. Take responsibility for any mistakes so that you may learn from them, then forgive yourself and **let them go**. This action at the close of every day will enable you to start each new day afresh.

Jules

Your view dictates your attitude (or is it the other way around?); give yourself every opportunity to be positive.

Jules has led the LifeSIGNS organisation for many years and is passionate about smashing the stigma around mental health.



Five a day for confidence

Whatever you're feeling right now, you can enhance and even change your thoughts and feelings by doing stuff.

It's like a science experiment, or cake recipe, or a magick spell - follow the basic instructions, add your own personal spin and see what happens!

- 1) **Do something for someone else:** don't ever do anything just to get a 'thank you' or to attempt to attract attention - you'll enhance your happiness if you genuinely spend some energy doing something selfless.
- 2) **Clear your workspace:** spend three minutes putting things where they should be - give yourself the space to really think and really work. Your brain will thank you for getting rid of the 'weight' of all that clutter.
- 3) **Write all your ideas, ambitions, concerns, tasks and worries down:** clear your mind so that it doesn't have to cycle through them all, or worry about forgetting something important. Record thoughts on your phone or in a notebook every day.
- 4) **Go outside:** you may have travelled for school, work or appointments, but make sure you go for a walk every day. Go visit a pond, a favourite shop, or just do a circuit of your town / area. The point is to open your senses to all the changes that occur and increase your awareness. Noticing new stuff can be inspiring and gives you stuff to talk about.
- 5) **Learn a new, personal way, of resting:** whether you like a cup of tea with a book, listening to a podcast with your eyes closed, or watching the world go by from a good seat in a café - do something that doesn't involve staring at the computer or TV screen.

Wedge

Our feelings may influence how we act, but our actions can also influence how we feel; so if you can build in some positive actions to your day (every day) you can help yourself create emotional resilience for those bad days.

Wedge founded the LifeSIGNS organisation in 2002 and he's confident that people must be free to talk about the drivers behind self-injury.

LifeSIGNS is run by volunteers with personal experience of self-injury and the mental, emotional and life issues behind it.



We're an unfunded charitable organisation, founded in 2002. We work in England and mean for our information to be useful to people of all ages and backgrounds across the UK and beyond.

This little ebook is free to download or share. Anyone can get it from: www.lifesigns.org.uk/five-a-day

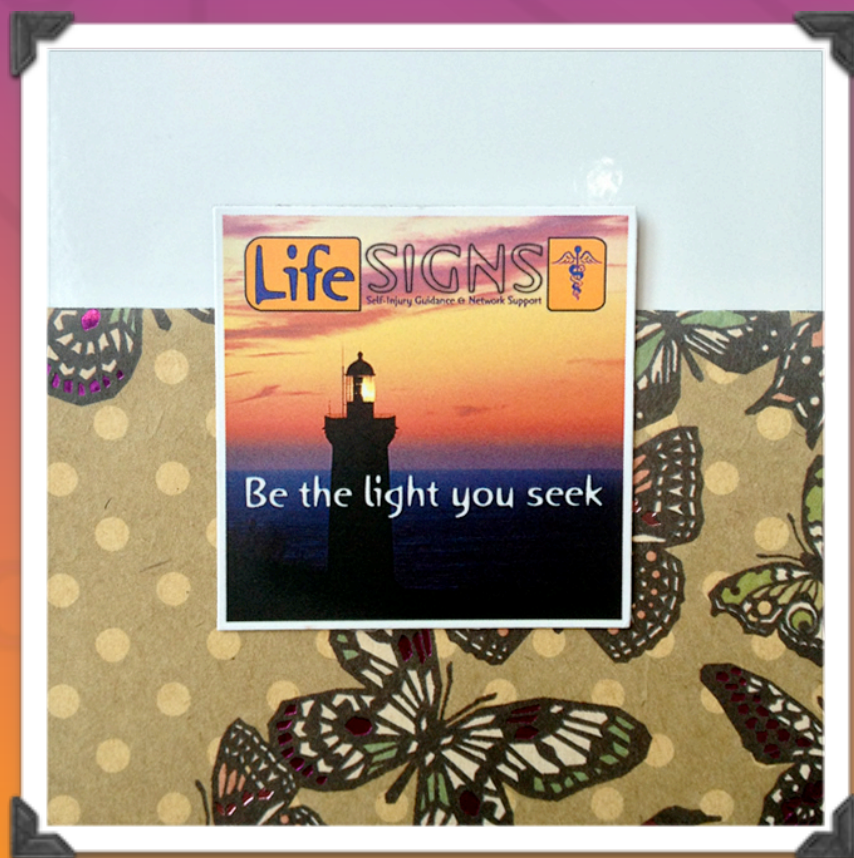
Share

There's even a really short address for you to tweet: <http://d.pr/nath>

You could email or tweet something like this:

Try @LifeSIGNS 'five a day' plan for happiness - ideas for better daily living: <http://d.pr/nath> [Free ebook]

Please share our PDF or the link on your Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, or blog. You never know who you might inspire.



Get our fridge magnet

It's our 11th birthday :)

To celebrate, we're giving everyone who donates £5 a cool fridge magnet as a birthday present.

Just visit: www.lifesigns.org.uk/donate

We *always* have fresh updates and new stuff on our home page; to keep up to date with LifeSIGNS, please sign up for our eNewsletter from our home page.

Visit our website to get involved with all our social networks: www.lifesigns.org.uk and try our mobile site for quick links: lifesigns.mobi

www.lifesigns.org.uk