



GOVERNMENT  
OF MALTA

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MINISTRY FOR HEALTH

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Superintendence  
of Public Health



HOW DOES THE  
WAY WE LIVE

DETERMINE  
OUR HEALTH?



# Introduction

Most of us are aware that physical activity, a balanced diet, not smoking and not taking up addictive substances are amongst the key factors contributing to better health and well-being. But what about our job, education, environment, and relationships? Can these affect our health, too? Research conducted across Europe by the WHO European Regional Office has shown that all these factors can make a significant difference to the quality of health that we enjoy.

For that reason, the Superintendence of Public Health within the Ministry for Health has prioritised this area through the *ESF Project – Establishing a National Platform to Address the Social Determinants of Health*. The aim of this project is to understand which of these factors are most likely to affect the health of Malta's population and the manner they can do so, and embark on an information campaign on what we can do to tackle these factors as individuals and as a nation.

Part of this campaign is the booklet you are holding, which is the fourth in a series of five. In this booklet, we focus on mental health and well-being and how, by taking care of ourselves, by talking about how we are feeling, by listening to each other, and by seeking professional help, we can make a huge difference to our way of life.

But, of course, this is not a one-size-fits-all since persons and their networks of loved ones are distinct and face unique economic, cultural, and societal realities. Nevertheless, change does not need to be overwhelming to be effective: small, yet decisive, steps towards being healthier and feeling more fulfilled are just as powerful. Moreover, the Government, through its many services, offers help along the way, fostering and encouraging positive change for all.



## Self-care Isn't Selfish

**A**nd he scores!" booms the sports commentator's voice from the television set.





**GOAL!**

Brothers Mario, Raymond, and Jesmond cheer, shout, and clap.

"What a game! What a game!" Jesmond shouts.

"It was fantastic," Raymond agrees.



“Right, I’m going home,” Mario tells them as he starts putting his jacket on.

“Already? Let’s have a bite to eat together. We never meet up!” Raymond tells him.

“I’m tired, Ray,” Mario replies, downcast.





“Mario, Ray and I have been meaning to talk to you,” Jesmond says, cautiously. “We’ve been worried. You’re always working, or stressed about work. Are you taking the time to take care of yourself?”



"Self-care?" Mario laughs. "Isn't that a woman's thing?"

"No, it's not," Jesmond replies. "We all need to take care of ourselves. Mentally, physically, and emotionally."

"Yes, it's important to slow down, Mario," Ray continues. "It's good to set aside some time to do what you love doing. To properly rest without looking at your phone or answering work emails."

“Plus, you’re going through a lot family-wise. How can you be there for them if you’re not feeling well yourself?”

“As my wife says, self-care isn’t selfish. It’s good for us, and it helps us to be there for others,” Raymond adds.

“Okay, okay,” Mario replies, smiling at his caring brothers. “But what do I do to self-care?”

“Physical activity helps,” answers Raymond. “As does eating healthy food.”



“Sleeping well and confiding in someone you really trust and not feeling ashamed in seeking help,” adds Jesmond, squeezing Mario’s shoulder. “And doing things you love, like watching football, or having a quiet dinner with your brothers!”

“So, just normal things that make us feel happy and relaxed?”





“Yes,” Raymond replies.  
“And turning rest and relaxation into a routine so you always know that you will have time to unwind and to be calmer. That’s part of the secret to a happier life!”





The electronic version in Maltese and English  
may be accessed here:



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