

As part of UKUPC's commitment to our members to share knowledge while supporting the wider procurement community, TUCO and TEC discuss best practice for optimal mental health and wellbeing.

*Why not register for this week's UKUPC Webinar Loneliness and Connection hosted by HEPCW on Friday 13 May 2022 from 10am. To find out more and register your FREE place go to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ukupc-webinar-loneliness-and-connection-tickets-325870325917>*

## **Supporting your staff's mental health with TEC resources**

There is a growing recognition that the mental wellbeing of employees has a vital role and a positive impact on employee health, professional fulfilment and organisational success. As part of Mental Health Awareness week we are showcasing the resources we offer and highlighting the importance of this.

TEC provide access to a free and confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) available for all staff to receive.

The EAP can offer practical information, fact sheets and packs, resource information on support services in your local area and even short-term face to face or telephonic counselling to help get you back on track. The EAP website offers extensive resources including articles, interactive tools and regular online seminars. The EAP is designed to help with a wide range of work, family and personal issues.

During the pandemic TEC helped staff maintain a positive and productive working environment by regularly surveying our team when working from home which was mandatory, to ensure their requirements were being met. Also providing resources such as [Mind](#) and access to more frequent team meetings with onscreen face to face time and get togethers via Teams each Friday afternoon, where like much of the world, quizzes and games were a big boost to our mental health.

At TEC we are also certified in Investors in People (IIP) at a Gold Standard. Part of the IIP framework includes leading and inspiring as well as empowering and involving the TEC team and we are looking to work with IIP's new We Invest in Wellbeing standard. This seeks to identify an organisations wellbeing journey and looks more deeply into the areas of physical, social and psychological wellbeing.

We are proud to offer staff the opportunity and resources to support them and ensure mental wellbeing is key in our approach.

As well as supporting internally we are delighted to have supported the charity Student Minds. Student Minds empower students and members of the university community to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to look after their own mental health, support others and create change. At TEC we understand the significance of supporting the sector and students and will continue to share this charities resources.

There are times when we all need some extra support to balance the demands of everyday life both at work and home and we understand the importance of this internally and externally. We are proud to share our partner UPC's resources and events for mental health wellbeing and keep this message strong and relevant.

## Supporting your students' mental health with optimal nutrition & TUCO

Nutrition as a means of both prevention and treatment of mental health, is understood by all and implemented by many. The Food for the Brain Foundation looks to educate and provide important information to children, parents, teachers, schools, universities, the public, health professionals, food service operators, caterers and the government, thereby promoting mental wellbeing and brain health through optimum nutrition. Last year, TUCO, in conjunction with Food for the Brain, ran a series of webinars on the impact nutrition can have on mental health and wellbeing.

Healthy bacteria in our guts connect directly with brain function – and we're only just beginning to understand the extent of this. Healthy and resilient gut can lead to a healthy and resilient brain.

For most people, the simple advice is to:

Eat more of:

- Vegetables
- Oily fish
- Whole foods
- Nuts & seeds
- Colourful foods which indicate a high level of antioxidants

Reduce:

- Sugar
- Refined carbs
- Processed foods
- Sweet drinks

Building on this, Food for the Brain have produced the following top tips for optimal brain health:

1. Hydrate well – drinking 6-8 glasses of water throughout the day can minimise mental confusion and lethargy. Research has found a correlation between hydration status and memory.
2. Healthy fats are key – omega 3 is key to brain health and this is found in many oily fish, nuts and seeds. Olive oil and avocados are also examples of healthy fats.
3. Help gut bacteria thrive – support your good bacteria by eating prebiotic and probiotic foods. Prebiotic foods include bananas, apples, onions, and probiotic foods include yoghurt, kefir, miso and tempeh.
4. Fruit & veg – aim to eat a rainbow of seasonal, fresh produce lightly cooked or raw to retain as many nutrients as possible
5. Minimise processed foods – processed foods tend to lack nutrients and can have a negative impact on brain health

A meta-analysis in 2017 looking at Dietary Patterns and Depression Risk found that the Western diet pattern is associated with an increased risk of depression. This diet tends to be high in processed foods, fat and sugar and low in whole foods. Similarly, research has also found that this diet can be associated with an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

For our members, how can you put these tips into practice at your institution? Start by looking at your menus; ensure it is easy to get at least five portions of fruit and/or veg, avoid more than one main carbohydrate food per meal and ensure oily fish is an easy choice at least weekly. Next, look at optimising recipes; use whole grain options where possible, manage portion size, 'de-junk' where

possible. For example, when serving pizza, think about a wholemeal crust, when serving salads include dense ingredients such as peppers rather than using mostly leaves, when serving yoghurt check if it's live yoghurt (not highly sweetened, processed yoghurt).

TUCO members can rewatch the full series below:

Session 1 - <https://www.tuco.ac.uk/academy/professional-development/webinar/food-brain-nutrition-practices-optimal-health>

Session 2 - <https://www.tuco.ac.uk/academy/professional-development/webinar/food-brain-nutrition-practices-optimal-health-and-mental>

Session 3 -

<https://www.facebook.com/TheUniversityCaterersOrganisation/videos/524950945197243>