

# CYCLING FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

*with Victoria Pendleton*

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes to our everyday lives.

As we muddle through the latest lockdown restrictions, the importance of looking after our mental health, as well as our general health, has become more apparent than ever.

Here, Victoria Pendleton discusses the impact of cycling on our mental wellbeing.



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## THE VALUE OF OUTDOOR EXERCISE

When it comes to mental wellbeing, I've always found that physical and mental health go hand-in-hand. If you look after your body and exercise regularly, you'll benefit from lots of feel-good hormones that give you a boost for the rest of the day.

But to unleash the full benefits of exercise for your mental health, it's important to appreciate the value of green space. It's been scientifically proven that humans benefit from spending time in nature. So, what better place to exercise? It's an amazing feeling to be immersed in your outdoor surroundings, something that looking through a window or at a device can never achieve.

While you're out exercising, engage with the nature around you. Taking a moment to savour the beauty in a view, a sunset, an ancient tree or a river is good for the soul – and making a conscious effort to be thoughtful and thankful in these moments has always made me feel positive.

## EXPLORING ON A BIKE

During the lockdowns, the opportunity to head outdoors and exercise became more important than ever. For me, cycling was the best and most convenient way to do this, and I relished the opportunity to discover new cycling routes.

And you don't need to go far from home – you'll be amazed what cycling routes you'll find just around the corner! A park, the countryside, or anywhere with few or no vehicles is the perfect place to ride.

By taking the opportunity to visit these areas on a bike ride, you get a mental release from the restrictions that we all find ourselves under.

## CYCLING FOR THE MIND

I'm always keen to encourage people to take up cycling as it has so many benefits. For a start, even a little cycling will boost your sleeping pattern. Tiredness is a sure-fire way to feel a lack of motivation and low mood. And with all the anxiety caused by the pandemic, I think any help in this department can only be a good thing.

The Covid crisis has also left many people feeling isolated. Going out for a bike ride is one way of getting some much-needed human interaction. When the restrictions allow, cycling can be experienced with others, and it's a great chance to be social.

If like me you are not very good at sitting still and being mindful, cycling is also the ideal time to get some headspace, have time to think through a problem, find some clarity in an idea, or find perspective of a situation. **It frees your mind!**



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## CYCLING FOR EVERYONE

Most importantly of all, cycling is accessible to everyone. If you've never cycled before, don't be put off. Every cyclist was new to riding at some point, even me! Learning a new skill or sport is a great way to build confidence and resilience. Challenging ourselves whether we are young or old helps us to overcome problems in everyday life.

And, whether going for your first ride, exploring new routes, or riding further than ever before, cycling is full of challenges.

Which is great, because when we feel good and revel in a sense of achievement, we're rewarded with a mental health boost – something that we can all benefit from.

**So, if you haven't already done so, take the opportunity to head out for a bike ride and explore the green spaces near you. It's really helped me, and you'll be amazed at how good it makes you feel.**

**For more information on how cycling can help your mental wellbeing, visit our online hub: [www.halfords.com/healthier-you](http://www.halfords.com/healthier-you)**



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