

PBS Helpline Resources

Quality of life

How good our life is has a big impact on how we behave. If our life is good, has quality, that may mean we are healthy, comfortable in ourselves and the world around us, have activities we enjoy doing and can make decisions about our life. (for me, that may mean a good night's sleep, no health issues, and coffee first thing in the morning, time to unwind with friends and family, and treats like time with a good book or cycling with a friend).

We need balance, things that are good for us, and things that we choose. We are unlikely to want to do the things that are good for us if the things that matter to us are missing.

If I'm not feeling well, I don't feel like chatting and joking, and being asked to do things could be too much. I might become irritable, snappy, or even shout or storm out. If I explained what was going on to the people who care about me they would probably understand, and support me. But what if I couldn't pinpoint what was wrong, or didn't have the words to explain? How would I get the support?

Having people around us who we trust, who understand us and support us, changes everything. Our network protects us when things go wrong. But if no-one knew I was in pain I might bite my hand, or push someone away when I couldn't cope.

There's a lot in life we have no control over, which can be quite daunting. But we make up for it in other ways – choosing what to wear, what type of toothpaste to buy, what to have for dinner, who we see and speak to, what time we go to bed... This makes us feel in control, and happier.

When choices are limited (for example, the meal you chose at the restaurant is not available) we feel put out. We may be irritable, and we choose whether to stay or leave. Exercising choice and control helps us to move on. If life is full of decisions being made without us, we can't move on, and may get stuck in frustration.

Choice and control is a need, and helping people get their needs met increases everyone's quality of life.