#RunAndTalk

Benefits of participating in Sport & Physical Activity:

If an individual is able to access sport in an environment that is open, empathetic and understanding, then the benefits that can be experienced are:

- Physical health benefits – Taking part in sport reduces risk of illness.
- Improved sleep patterns - Taking part in sport will help improve the quality of sleep.
- Increased resistance to stress - You may experience reductions in feelings of stress and tension as your body is better able to control cortisol levels.
- Reduced risk of depression- If you are more active there is strong evidence to suggest that at most ages, for both men and women, there is a trend towards lower rates of depression. In fact, one study has found that by increasing your activity levels from doing nothing to exercising at least three times a week, you can reduce your risk of depression by almost 20%.
- Reduced anxiety - When you exercise, your brain chemistry changes through the release of endorphins *(sometimes called 'feel good' hormones),* which can calm anxiety and lift your mood.
- Improved self-esteem - When you start to see your fitness levels increase, it can give your self-esteem a big boost. The sense of achievement you get from learning a new skill and achieving your goals can also help you feel better about yourself and lift your mood. Improved self-esteem also has a protective effect that increases life satisfaction and can make you more resilient to feeling stressed.
- Clearer thinking - Individuals find that exercise helps to break up racing thoughts. As your body tires, so does your mind, leaving you with a greater sense of calm and better able to think clearly.
- Improved mood – By being physically active.
- Protective factor in cognitive decline and dementia - Physical activity has been identified as a protective

As always if you need any help or support then please contact me via email, text or feel free to speak with me on a club night.

Vicky Shaw
Mental Health Champion
E: hello@bedfordharriers.co.uk