



■ Maeve Halpin, and below, her book 'How to be Happy and Healthy - the Seven Natural Elements of Mental Health'.

Maeve reveals path to health and happiness

LEADING PSYCHOLOGIST LAUNCHES HER FIRST BOOK

DEBORAH COLEMAN

HELPING others to take care of their mental health has been a long-standing career for Maeve Halpin.

She has spent more than 20 years working as a psychologist and counsellor and has recently published her first book 'How to be Happy and Healthy - the Seven Natural Elements of Mental Health'.

The book, which is divided into seven sections, each written by a professional in that particular field, covers seven key areas which Maeve explained are vital when it comes to good mental health.

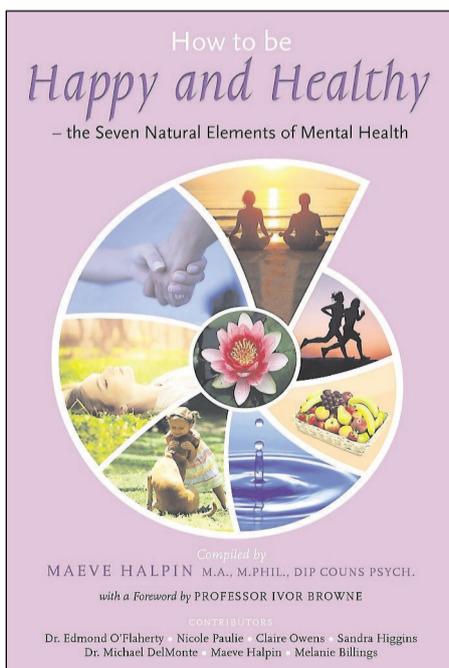
'There are a whole range of things that people can do for their mental health, practical things that can be done on a daily basis,' said Maeve.

'The book is about giving people the tools and empowering them to make changes in their lives for the better.'

The first three parts of the book are dedicated to diet and nutrition, exercise and sleep.

'These are like a three-legged stool because our nervous system is absolutely physical. The brain is a factory producing chemicals all the time and the food we eat is the only fuel it gets. The quality of our diet has a huge effect on our wellbeing so by cutting out processed food in favour of more nutritious options, we see an improvement to our overall wellbeing. People have forgotten the importance of cooking and there really is no substitute for natural food.'

Similarly Maeve said that inadequate sleep can be detrimental to our mental wellbeing. 'Broken and disrupted sleep can be a major indicator for mental health problems. The cells of our body repair while we sleep so it is very important to allow ourselves to wind



down, turn off technology and get enough sleep. There are plenty of ways to help improve the quality of our sleep but often it is a case of allowing ourselves to prioritise sleep and to make sure we go to bed on time. The body likes routine and this can build up an invulnerability to stress.'

Maeve also outlines the benefits to be gained from regular exercise, at least the recommended 30 minutes, three times per week.

The second half of the book covers the areas of mindfulness, compassion and meditation which show the reader how to

be kind to themselves in order to allow them to make the changes they need towards better mental health.

Being able to meditate, Maeve said, is an extremely useful tool that she likened to a glass of muddy water that, when left still, separates the mud from the clear and calm water on top.

'We are very self-critical and we often undermine our own self-esteem. Compassion is a very healing practice and allows us to forgive and nurture ourselves.'

On top of these practices, counselling can be beneficial to those who often feel trapped by their circumstances and who need to find understanding in their own lives.

'People often think that counselling is something that you carry on for your lifetime but this is not always the case. Often six or eight sessions can help a person greatly and it can be a very practical tool to help them to look at their options.'

'People sometimes need to talk through issues with a neutral party who isn't invested in their decisions in order to find clarity.'

Maeve describes human beings as a 'package deal' and said that in researching the book she knew she wanted to give people the power to help themselves.

The publication differs from many health and wellbeing books as it covers many topics but in a very defined way, despite the fact that they all interlink when mental health is addressed overall.

'How to be Happy and Healthy-the Seven Natural Elements of Mental Health' is on sale now from Amazon and on Kindle, from local bookshops and from Halpin Furniture, Arklow which is owned by Maeve's brother Michael.

Enter now for Heritage Week

AFTER a hugely successful Heritage Week, with wide ranging events across the county, event organisers are being reminded to enter the 2014 Heritage Week Organiser Awards.

Michael Starrett, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, said: 'National Heritage Week 2014 has been a fantastic success with over 980 event organisers running events during the week. It is fantastic to see that 31 per cent of those organising events this year have been involved in Heritage Week for more than five years, while 25 per cent were getting involved for the first time.'

'Heritage Week would not be the success it is if it wasn't for the dedication and commitment of all those who get involved in organizing events and promoting their local heritage for people to enjoy.'

He encouraged event organisers across Wicklow to enter their events in the 2014 Event Organiser Awards which showcase the fantastic work by event organisers throughout the week. Entries can be made in the following categories: Best Overall Event, Best Event organised by a Community Group/NGO/Individual, Best Children's Event (under 12s), Best Interactive Event, Most Innovative Event and Best Event organised in conjunction with a Local Authority.

The closing date for entry is Friday, September 19. Find out more details on www.heritageweek.ie



■ Joe and Bernadette Kelly at the National Heritage Week event in Preban cemetery recently.

Leading Lights in local road safety

WICKLOW people are being asked to nominate their 'Leading Lights in Road Safety' for the Road Safety Authority's annual awards.

Last year, Dave Byrne of New Court Special School, Bray, was awarded a Special Recognition Award for his work at the school to promote road safety. With a high number of buses entering and exiting their school and a vulnerable student population, New Court Special School put in place a safety procedure for students when embarking and disembarking from buses each morning and at home time. Dave Byrne has been overseeing these safety procedures for the

last five years.

Now in its seventh year, the awards recognise and honour the contribution made by people nationwide to reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

The RSA is calling on communities all over Wicklow to once again nominate their 'Leading Lights' in road safety - people who campaign, educate and are committed to improving road safety in their community.

Details of how to enter your nomination are available on www.rsa.ie/leading-lights. This year you can now enter your nomination online, by e-mail or by post.