

Mental Health – Support and Awareness

What is mental health?

Mental health relates to emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. Our mental health affects how we view things, how we feel and our behaviors. Our mental health also impacts on our reaction to challenges and affects the choices we make.

Our mental health can be affected (both positively and negatively) by our social circumstances, health and life events. Our own behaviour can affect other people's mental health.



When we feel mentally well we are able to cope with life events, actively socialise, and generally deal with everyday life and life events. However, if we feel in low mood, adversely challenged it can impact on our mental health. Everyone has an off day.

Some people are more likely to have adverse mental health which can be caused by biological factors, general health, life experiences (adverse trauma/abuse) or familial history.

Symptoms to look out for

We all know what it is like to have an off day and having the Eeyore feeling of being a little down. However, these feelings persist it is likely you may need a little help/support. Below is a list of some of signs/symptoms to be aware of:-



- Too much/not enough/disrupted sleep
 - Lack of energy
 - Unexplained aches and pains
 - Excessive use of tobacco or alcohol
 - Difficulty getting up out of bed
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- Feeling of numbness
 - Avoiding people
 - Avoiding usual activities
 - Loss of interest
 - Feeling muddled, forgetful, agitated, angry, tearful or scared.
 - Feeling constantly on edge
 - Short tempered and argumentative
 - Mood swings
 - Hearing voices
 - Believing in things that are untrue
 - Considering harming yourself or someone else
 - Unable to carry out simple daily tasks



Mental Health Conditions - There are numerous mental health conditions/diagnoses. These can range from everyday worries/concerns/challenges that everyone faces day to day to serious long-term conditions. Below is a list of some mental health conditions

- Anxiety and Depression
- Panic attacks
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar
- Eating disorders – eg bulimia and anorexia
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Postnatal depression
- Self-harm/suicide

Self Help - Many people are reluctant to seek help for mental health issues. The earlier help is sought the less the problem is entrenched and is more responsive and easier to treat.

If you liken your body and mind to a motor engine it needs particular factors to keep it going. If you put the wrong fuel or no fuel in your car it will not work. If you do not get it serviced it will develop faults. Your body needs healthy food, adequate fluid intake, exercise and sleep for it to function properly. Looking after these elements is a step in the right direction. Regular routine, such as getting up and going to bed timings and eating at the same time is also helpful for this. Mindfulness and other self-help treatments is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/#self-help-and-treatments>

Additional Help - Just like when we have a physical illness we seek advice the same is for mental health. Your GP is the first port of call who can assess your need for medication/talking therapies and refer you to the appropriate services. You may have an EAP service via your employer who can assist with talking therapies. On line CBT can be undertaken at <https://littf.com/> further help and tips can be found at NHS Choices webpage <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>



Urgent Assistance - If you were to feel in need of urgent help as you do not feel you can keep yourself safe below are your options:-

- Let your partner, next of kin or close friend know to assist you getting help if possible
- Go immediately to your GP Surgery
- Call your GP surgery requesting an emergency appointment
- Contact NHS 111 (England) or 08454647 (Wales)
- Call Samaritans on 116123 - 24 hours a day
- If you are under mental health services already, contact your emergency contact number
- Attend the nearest Accident & Emergency Department
- Call 999 for an urgent ambulance to take you to A&E if you cannot get someone to take you and are unable to get there safely yourself

If you can access the internet the following link is also for those in need of urgent assistance - <https://www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/?ctaId=/need-urgent-help/using-this-tool/slices/using-this-tool/> (source MIND.org.uk)