

Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood



This guide is to improve your understanding of Mental Health, improve your mental health and where to get support.

5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are **5 steps** you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.



Step 1 Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

DO

- ✓ Take time each day to be with your family, for example, try arranging a fixed time to eat dinner together.
 - ✓ Arrange a day out with friends you have not seen for a while.
- ✓ Try switching off the TV to talk or play a game with your children, friends or family
 - ✓ Have lunch with a colleague
- ✓ Visit a friend or family member who needs support or company
- ✓ Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group. Find out how to volunteer on the GOV.UK website
- ✓ Make the most of technology to stay in touch with friends and family. Video-chat apps like Skype and FaceTime are useful, especially if you live far apart

Don't

- ✗ Do not rely on technology or social media alone to build relationships. It's easy to get into the habit of only ever texting, messaging or emailing people



Step 2 Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:



- raising your self-esteem
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood



Do

✓ Find free activities to help you get fit

- ✓ If you have a disability or long-term health condition, find out about getting active with a disability
 - ✓ Start running with the couch to 5k podcasts
 - ✓ Find out how to start swimming, cycling or dancing
 - ✓ Find out about getting started with exercise

Don't

- ✗ do not feel that you have to spend hours in a gym. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life

Step 3 Learn new Skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others



Do

- ✓ Try learning to cook something new. Find out about healthy eating and cooking tips
- ✓ Work on a DIY project, such as fixing a broken bike, garden gate or something bigger. There are lots of free video tutorials online
- ✓ Consider signing up for a course with Right Track. You could try learning a new language or a practical skill such as plumbing
- ✓ Try new hobbies that challenge you, such as writing a blog, taking up a new sport or learning to paint

- ✗ **Don't** feel you have to learn new qualifications or sit exams if this does not interest you. find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life



Step 4 Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- helping you connect with other people



It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

Some examples of the things you could try include:

- saying thank you to someone for something they have done for you
- asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer
- spending time with friends or relatives who need support or company
- offering to help someone you know with DIY or a work project
- volunteering in your community, such as helping at a school, hospital or care home

Step 5 Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges



How to spot Mental Health Issues

Early common signs to look out for

- Poor concentration
- Being easily distracted
- High or low moods
- Fear, worry and anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- Irritability
- Sleeping more or less
- Changes in eating habits
- Aggression
- Talking more or less
- Changes in behaviour
- Appetite changes



Remember, if you spot one of these signs, it doesn't always mean someone has a mental health issue. It could signal an underlying health problem or something else entirely.

Anybody at anytime in their life can experience mental health issues, triggers could be a recent event or something that happened years ago.

How common are mental health problems?

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England.
- 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England.

Depression is a low mood disorder. We all feel down at times, but if these feelings last and get in the way of your life, you could have depression.

Here are the most common symptoms. You may have some and not others, but any of them could mean you have depression.



- Feeling sad or irritable
- Feeling less able to do things
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Becoming tired easily, losing concentration
- Sleeping and eating less or more
- Low self-esteem, feeling guilty or worthless
 - Losing interest in sex
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

TREATMENT

Self-help methods enable many people to overcome or manage low moods.

There are many talking therapy options too, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), group therapy or counselling. You may also be offered antidepressant medication.

If you feel you need help then speak to your doctor, they will be able to support you to access local services, other sources of information are:

- mind.org.uk
- anxietyuk.org.uk
- samaritans.org



Anxiety UK

SAMARITANS

Stress makes you feel like you're under too much mental or emotional pressure. It affects us all, but if you're under stress for long periods, it can damage your mental health.

There are many causes, such as money and relationship problems, being unemployed, physical illness or going through a big life event – such as moving house.

Common Symptoms



- Irritability
- Racing or obsessive thoughts
- Being forgetful, not concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sweating and dizziness
- Headaches or muscle pain
- Bowel or bladder problems
- Dry mouth, shortness of breath
- Fast heartbeat

TREATMENT

There are lots of ways to help yourself, including exercise, meditation or stress management courses.

But if you still find it hard to cope, your GP can offer advice, along with access to talking therapy and medication.

- mind.org.uk
- samaritans.org

Anxiety means feeling worried, fearful or nervous. It's natural to be anxious - but if the feelings don't go away, get worse or have no particular cause, they can become a problem.

There are different types of anxiety - including panic attacks, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. But here are some common symptoms for them all:

- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of dread
- Irritability
- Sleep and appetite problems
- Fast breathing and heartbeat
- Hot flushes or blushing
- Dry mouth
- Shaking
- Extreme tiredness or lack of energy
- Dizziness and fainting
- Stomach aches and sickness



TREATMENT

Many people use self-help methods, talking therapy can really help too, either one-to-one or in a group. You can also tackle anxiety with medication, and both of these options are available on the NHS.

If you have any symptoms described in this document, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor.

- anxietyuk.org.uk

Bipolar disorder can be severe, affecting all aspects of life. Each mood can last a short time, or for weeks and months.

Bipolar can make your mood change dramatically – from feeling very depressed, to being over-active (also called mania).

The symptoms of depression can include:

- Feeling sad or irritable
- Lack of energy or interest in life
- Sleeping and eating less or more
- Low self-esteem
- Losing interest in sex
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

The symptoms of mania can include:

- Feeling energetic or restless
- Irritability
- Talking quickly
- Making impulsive decisions
- Being sexually promiscuous
- Being argumentative or aggressive

TREATMENT

You can be prescribed antidepressants or mood stabilisers. You might also benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy, or psychoeducation to help you learn about managing the symptoms. If you have any symptoms described in this document, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.

OCD can affect men, women and children. Some people start having symptoms early, often around puberty, but it usually starts during early adulthood.

OCD can be distressing and significantly interfere with your life, but treatment can help you keep it under control.

Symptoms

If you have OCD, you'll usually experience frequent obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.

An obsession is an unwanted and unpleasant thought, image or urge that repeatedly enters your mind, causing feelings of anxiety, disgust or unease.

A compulsion is a repetitive behaviour or mental act that you feel you need to do to temporarily relieve the unpleasant feelings brought on by the obsessive thought.

For example, someone with an obsessive fear of being burgled may feel they need to check all the windows and doors are locked several times before they can leave their house.

Women can sometimes have OCD during pregnancy or after their baby is born. Obsessions may include worrying about harming the baby or not sterilising feeding bottles properly. Compulsions could be things such as repeatedly checking the baby is breathing.

Treatment

- psychological therapy – usually cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which helps you face your fears and obsessive thoughts without "putting them right" through compulsions
- medicine – usually a type of antidepressant medicine called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which can help by altering the balance of chemicals in your brain

Speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.

- ocduk.org



Postnatal depression is a type of depression that many parents experience after having a baby.

It's a common problem, affecting more than 1 in every 10 women within a year of giving birth. It can also affect fathers and partners.

It's important to seek help as soon as possible if you think you might be depressed, as your symptoms could last months or get worse and have a significant impact on you, your baby and your family.

With the right support most people make a full recovery.

Symptoms

Many women feel a bit down, tearful or anxious in the first week after giving birth. This is often called the "baby blues" and is so common that it's considered normal.

The "baby blues" do not last for more than 2 weeks after giving birth. If your symptoms last longer or start later, you could have postnatal depression.

Postnatal depression can start any time in the first year after giving birth.

Signs that you or someone you know might be depressed include:

- a persistent feeling of sadness and low mood
- lack of enjoyment and loss of interest in the wider world
- lack of energy and feeling tired all the time
- trouble sleeping at night and feeling sleepy during the day
- difficulty bonding with your baby
- withdrawing from contact with other people
- problems concentrating and making decisions
- frightening thoughts – for example, about hurting your baby



Many women do not realise they have postnatal depression, because it can develop gradually.

Treatment

Postnatal depression can be lonely, distressing and frightening, but support and effective treatments are available.

These include:

- self-help – including talking to your family and friends about your feelings, making time for yourself, resting whenever you get the chance, getting as much sleep as you can at night, exercising regularly, and eating a healthy diet
- psychological therapy – such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- antidepressants – these may be recommended if your depression is more severe or other treatments have not helped.

Worried about your mental health?

Speak to your doctor

You might find it hard to talk about how you feel, but every GP has mental health training.

They're ready to offer the right support. What will happen?

Your doctor might prescribe medication, offer talking therapy or suggest lifestyle changes. They can also refer you to a specialist team if they think you're affected by a more serious condition.

Make the most of your visit

- See if there is a GP in the practice with a mental health interest
- Ask for a double appointment if you think you'll need more time
- Write down your feelings and symptoms
- Write down any questions
- Take someone you trust with you



Search Mental Health on: www.nhs.co.uk

Helplines

Samaritans. To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call 116 123 (free from any phone)

SANEline. If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call SANEline on 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK. Offers a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. Call 0800 689 5652 (open 24/7).

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM). You can call the CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day) if you are struggling and need to talk. Or if you prefer not to speak on the phone, you could try the CALM webchat service.

The Mix. If you're under 25, you can call The Mix on 0808 808 4994 (3pm–midnight every day), request support by email using this form on The Mix website or use their crisis text messenger service.

Papyrus HOPELINEUK. If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call on 0800 068 4141 (weekdays 10am–10pm, weekends 2pm–10pm and bank holidays 2pm–10pm), email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text 07786 209 697.

Do you want to better understand Mental Health?

We offer a range of free courses you can access if you are:

- Unemployed, over 19 and a UK resident
- On low income, less than £17,344
- Employed in Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham or Nottingham

Mental Health Awareness

This looks at specific areas of mental health and will enable you to develop a deeper understanding in different areas also being able to identify signs and symptoms, the impact it has on the person experiencing mental ill health and those around them and importantly where and how to access support.

Anxiety, Stress, Phobias, Depression, Postnatal Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Dementia and Eating Disorders

Children & Young Peoples Mental Health

What's covered:

- Children and young people's mental health in context
- Mental health problems commonly associated with children and young people
- The impact of mental ill-health on children and young people
- Support available to maintain mental wellbeing in children and young people.

Mental Health First Aid

Investigate different types of mental ill health, and factors that may increase the risk of mental ill health in individuals and understand how to support individuals with mental ill health.

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Speak to us to find out more

Email: info@rtse.co.uk

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