



Supporting mental health and wellbeing

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Mental health can sometimes feel like a complex and intimidating subject. However, anyone can experience a mental health problem. Therefore, being able to talk about it and understand what mental health is, becomes important for us all. You don't need to be an expert on mental health, as often smaller and everyday actions can make the biggest differences.

1 in 4 adults and 1 in 8 young people experience a mental health problem

What is mental health?

This refers to the way we think, feel, and act. Everybody has mental health, in the same way as everybody has physical health. We therefore need to make sure we look after it.

Whilst going through a period of poor mental health, people can often find that the way they think, feel, or react become a lot more difficult (or even impossible) to cope with.

This help sheet aims to support people with spotting the signs and symptoms of poor mental health, how to be able to have open conversations to aid mental wellbeing and reduce stigma around not opening up, promoting good mental wellbeing in your household, and where you can go for additional help.



Spotting the signs and symptoms

Whilst we are not responsible for diagnosing mental health problems, there might be some noticeable behavioural patterns and signs that could indicate a person is struggling.

These might include:

- Being tearful or frequently upset
- Restlessness
- Having paranoid thoughts
- Avoiding friends or social events
- Easy to anger, or for prolonged periods of time
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Not enjoying activities that were previously joyful
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Struggling with normal tasks and daily stresses

How to start a conversation

1. **Do your research** – understanding what mental health and wellbeing is, will help you feel confident to start the conversation and answer questions they may have.
2. **Create a safe space** – ideally somewhere comfortable, and void of distractions, to help them to open up.
3. **Listen** – let them know that this is time for them to talk, and that you are there for them. Try not to offer solutions right away, and ask what they think could help.
4. **Be open** – some people find it difficult to talk about mental health and wellbeing. Being open and gently encouraging conversation helps mental health to become an everyday topic that people are more comfortable to talk about.
5. **Be honest** – they may have questions about mental health and wellbeing, and you may not have all of the answers. Be honest about not knowing and agree how you will follow up.
6. **Encourage them to seek help** – encouragement could be made to speak with other family members, or to a GP. You might also signpost them to support in your local area.





Promoting good mental health

Just like our physical health, there are things we can all do to improve our mental health. The [five ways to wellbeing](#) have been researched thoroughly, and there is evidence to show that they can improve our ability to feel good and function better. The five ways are:

1. **Connect** – with people around you (family, friends, colleagues, neighbours), putting 5-10 minutes aside to find out how you and others are doing. Spend time during these meetings to strengthen those relationships.
2. **Be active** – find something you can really enjoy. You don't have to be an Olympic Athlete to keep active. This could be walks or hikes, time spent in the garden, or doing an activity such as cycling and a kick about in your local park.
3. **Take notice** – be more aware of your surroundings and what is happening right now, for example the change in seasons or local environment. Ask others what was good about their day.
4. **Keep learning** – try something different, or research an issue that is important to you.
5. **Give** – to others and to yourself to have you feel good. Maybe get involved in a community project as a volunteer or with a charity.

Additional help

Remember, we might not find the support and help that fits or feel right for us first time. What's important is that we don't stop seeking the support we need; and it's good to keep your GP informed as they may be able to help. Further information and guidance to support from mental health charities, can be found on the [NHS website](#).

