



How to look after mental health



OxfordCBT E-Guide

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WHAT IS WELLBEING

Wellbeing has a defined meaning of “the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy”. And although this is true, it has more of a meaning than just in the moment happiness. Wellbeing also relates to the satisfaction that people have in their lives as a whole and how in control they feel.

Wellbeing also includes the environmental factors that are around us and the effects they have on us as well. These include our own capabilities as individuals, how we feel about ourselves, the quality of the relationships that we have with other people and our sense of purpose. These are all needs that are an important part of what makes us human, along with wanting to feel positive and negative feelings.

An overall sense of wellbeing can not be achieved without a balance of these aspects:

- **Physical.** This includes lifestyle choices, what we eat and how active we are will affect our physical wellbeing.
- **Emotional.** This is how we cope with everyday life and reflects how we think and feel about ourselves.
- **Social.** This refers to the feeling of belonging and social inclusion. The way we communicate with others, our relationships with them, our values, beliefs and lifestyles are all important factors of social wellbeing.
- **Economic.** Economic wellness is our ability to meet our basic needs and feel a sense of security.
- **Intellectual.** It is important to gain and expand our knowledge and skills in order to live an enjoyable and successful life.
- **Wellness** is the complete combination of body, mind and spirit. It is important to realise that everything we do, think, feel and believe has an effect on our wellbeing.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

Stress is a normal reaction in our bodies to a potentially dangerous situation. When you encounter stress, your brain floods your body with chemicals and hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. This then gets your heart beating faster and sends blood to your muscles and important organs. When encountering stress you feel energized and have heightened awareness.

There are 3 main different types of stress which are listed below:

1 Acute Stress

This is the body's immediate reaction to a new and challenging situation. It can also come out of something you enjoy as it is frightening yet thrilling. Acute stress doesn't cause you any harm but it can actually help your brain and body practice how to respond to future more stressful situations. Once the situation that has passed that has caused the acute stress your feelings should return to normal.



2 Episodic Acute Stress

This is the term that is used to refer to frequent cases of acute stress. This type of stress occurs if you are worried about something that is going to happen in the future. People who suffer with episodic stress may feel as if their life is very chaotic and they go from one stressful situation to another. This type of stress can cause problems with your mental and physical health.



3 Chronic Stress

If you are experiencing a high level of stress all of the time then you will be suffering with chronic stress. Long term stress like this will more than likely cause severe problems to your physical health such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, depression and a weak immune system. Chronic stress can also lead to frequent headaches, digestion problems and sleep difficulties.



Lots of us will experience feelings of anxiety at some time in our lives but if you feel a persistent, overwhelming sense of nervousness, then you may suffer from one of the common types of anxiety.

There are 7 main types of anxiety disorders and these are listed below:

1 Generalized Anxiety Disorder

This is where you feel anxious in lots of different situations. A key sign of this disorder is if your anxieties do not match your surroundings and you can not pinpoint your anxiety to a certain situation. Symptoms of this disorder include heart palpitations, sweating and quick and shallow breathing.

2 Panic Disorder

If someone is suffering with this disorder then they will experience frequent and recurring panic attacks. The person will feel tight chest pains similar to a heart attack, sweating, elevated heart rate and trouble breathing. People will experience at least 1 panic attack in their life, but someone who suffers with panic disorder will suffer with them more frequently and it will begin to affect their daily life.

3 Social Anxiety Disorder

This is where social interactions are the root cause of your anxiety. It might be that you are afraid to leave your house for fear of being judged by others and this then interferes with your ability to maintain friendships/relationships, or even hold down a job. If someone has social anxiety disorder then they will frequently pass up opportunities to mix with other people and will decline invites to events.

4 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

This happens when you have been through a traumatic experience and you have trouble processing and dealing with what has happened and healing. Symptoms of PTSD include reliving the experience over and over and also avoiding experiences or situations that remind the sufferer of the trauma.

5 Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Sufferers from OCD will have compulsions to complete certain routines or daily rituals for fear that something bad will happen to them or their loved ones if they do not do it. There is a cycle that OCD follows: Obsessions, Anxiety, Compulsions and Relief. Mental health professionals identify OCD by compulsions that cause excess stress in the life of the sufferer.

6 Separation Anxiety Disorder

We hear of this when talking about younger children and their struggle to be separate from their parents for an extended period of time but adults can also suffer from this too. Symptoms in adults include worry about being away from loved ones, a fear of losing a parent and not wanting to leave home due to being separated from loved ones.

7 Phobias

Phobias are labelled as irrationality and avoidance in individuals. Most people who suffer from a phobia know that it is not based on reality, but they can't stop themselves. Phobias can cause difficulties for the sufferer with their daily life and can become very serious.

MANAGING STRESS

In our lives, everybody will be presented with stressful situations. It might be an issue at work or a crisis at home that needs serious attention and action immediately, or it might be ongoing nagging issues that are starting to build up. No matter how it presents itself, stress needs to be managed so that you can think clearly to solve the problem. Having a plan in place for dealing with your stress is a good idea and here are some ways you can include in your own plan.

1 Step Back

When we are presented with a stressful situation the first way to manage it is to take a step back and put the problem into perspective. When something bad happens at work, or you miss out on something and start to stress and panic, take a moment to think. Will this problem be a problem in a year or 5 years down the line? If the answer is no, it won't be a problem to you, then try to let go and move on. Having perspective is very important, it may feel like the worst thing ever at that moment, but will it still feel like that in the future?

2 List possible solutions

Listing is really good as it gets all the thoughts out of your head and written down so you can then read and look back and have a clearer mind to think. Realising that you have options will have a direct effect on your stress.

3 Accept things you can't control

Unfortunately, there are lots of things in life that we cannot control and we just have to learn and cope with them. What you do have control over is how you react to stressful situations. Find ways to stay calm and get emotional support from others.

4 Take a break

Taking time for yourself is important for preventing and managing stress. Daily stressors can build and build and before you realise you are tipped over the edge. Try to build in breaks in your working day and week to do something relaxing, read a book, listen to music or take a bath.

Having perspective is very important, it may feel like the worst thing ever at that moment, but will it still feel like that in the future?



5 Talk to people

As mentioned before, gain emotional support from your family and friends. If something is bothering you, reach out and don't keep it to yourself. They may not have the answers or the solutions but it is better to have your feelings and ideas out there in the open and to have someone to listen to those.

6 Have reasonable limits

Regularly taking on more than you can handle will inevitably lead to stress and burnout. It is ok to say no to certain tasks, there is no obligation for you to accept every request that is passed your way. This relates to your work and your home life. This can also link to your finances, taking on too many financial commitments can add to your stress.

7 Solve a problem before it gets bigger

It is common that when faced with a problem we don't want to/know how to solve, we avoid it. If a problem is left it will become harder to solve and more stressful but addressing it early will make it easier to solve.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR WELLBEING

1 Talk about your feelings

This is first because it is the best way to look after your wellbeing. Talking about your feelings is not a sign of weakness. It is important that you don't hold onto things and you discuss how you're feeling with the right person, be that a partner, friend or manager. Talking can be a way to release something you have been holding onto in your head.

Although it is so important, it isn't easy to describe the way we are feeling. It might be one word, it might need a lot of discussion to understand the things you are feeling and sometimes just being listened to can help you to do that. The other person may not be able to give you the answer that you want, but they may help you to make sense of what is going on.

It doesn't need to be made to be a big thing where you sit your loved ones down for a talk. This can be awkward and feel pressured. Instead, people find it easier to talk when the conversation is natural, like when doing an activity. Make talking about your feelings something that you just do. And it works both ways, if you open and talk, other people might too.

2 Take a break

This can mean lots of different things. It can mean taking a long break away and visiting somewhere, it can mean taking a lunch break away from work, or it can also mean taking 5 minutes to remove yourself from a stressful situation to allow yourself time to destress.

People will have different ways that they choose to take a break. Some people may want to be really active and do a workout, or yoga, to remove themselves from the situation that has made them feel stressed and to distract their mind. Some may choose to do something less strenuous such as going for a walk so they can take in a change of scenery. For others, a break may mean taking some quiet time to do nothing, maybe have a bath or just take a quiet moment to themselves to allow for their thoughts to wander.

The most important thing with this, is to listen to your body. If you are tired, then make sure you get some sleep. If you are feeling hungry, then eat the right foods to help your mental wellbeing. It sounds simple, but so often life will get in the way and we will forget to stop and listen to what our body is telling us.



3 Eat Well

Everyone knows that a good balanced diet is vital for our physical health, but it is also so important to our mental health. Our brains need a mixture of the right nutrients to be able to function properly, just like our organs in our body. There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel, and we need to be aware of what we are putting into our bodies.

A healthy balanced diet includes:

- Different types of fruit and vegetables
- wholegrain cereals or bread
- nuts and seeds
- dairy products
- oily fish
- plenty of water



You should try to eat at least 3 meals a day and drink plenty of water. Sugar and caffeine play a massive part in affecting our moods and we should try to limit how much we have of these.

4 Drink Sensibly

This links to what was mentioned above. It is important for our bodies and minds that we drink enough water to function properly. It is also important that we think about our alcohol consumption too. People will often drink to change their mood, or to deal with fear or loneliness, but its effects are only temporary.

Once alcohol has worn off, we are still left with having to deal with the reasons why we drank in the first place. The problem is still there. Drinking is not a good solution to managing your feelings. Too much alcohol can do damage to your body and you would need more and more alcohol each time to feel the same short-term boost. There are healthier ways of coping with tough times.

Occasional light drinking is perfectly healthy and enjoyable for most people as long as you stay within the recommended weekly alcohol limits of 14 units a week for both men and women.





5 Keep active

Same as we all know that eating well is good for our physical health, we know that keeping active is too. And again same as eating well, keeping active is also immensely important for our mental health. Participating in regular physical activity has been associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety and even been found to slow age-related cognitive decline. Exercise has also been found to alleviate symptoms such as low self-esteem and social withdrawal.

Some people love exercise, others hate it, but it's important to remember that staying active doesn't have to be going for a run, heading to the gym or doing something that requires expensive equipment. Walks in the park, gardening or even housework can also keep you active.

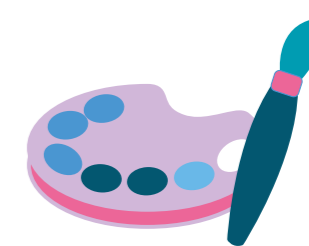
Experts say most people should do about 30 minutes' exercise at least five days a week and that exercise activity can be anything that elevates your heart rate.

Try to build these into your daily routine to change your habits and to help you keep active:

- If there is an option and you are able, take the stairs instead of the escalator or lift.
- Go for a walk at lunchtime, a change of surroundings and fresh air can do wonders for your mental wellbeing.
- When you go to work or go out in the car, park further away so you have to walk a little.
- If you sit at a desk all day for work, ensure you stand up at regular intervals.
- For some people, getting up from their desk is not easy so take part in regular stretches instead while sitting down.
- Walking around your building is a way to get extra steps into your day.

6 Do something you enjoy

For so many of us, our lives are consumed with work and home life. We have lots of tasks to get done in all areas of our lives and therefore doing things for you, get put to the back of your mind. It is important that you take time out for yourself, and do something that you enjoy.



Enjoying yourself will help to beat and overcome any stresses that you are experiencing in other areas of your life. Even better, if you are doing an activity you enjoy, it probably means you're good at it and achieving and participating in something will boost your self-esteem.

Concentrating on a hobby like gardening, the crossword or mindful colouring can help you forget your worries for a while and change your mood.

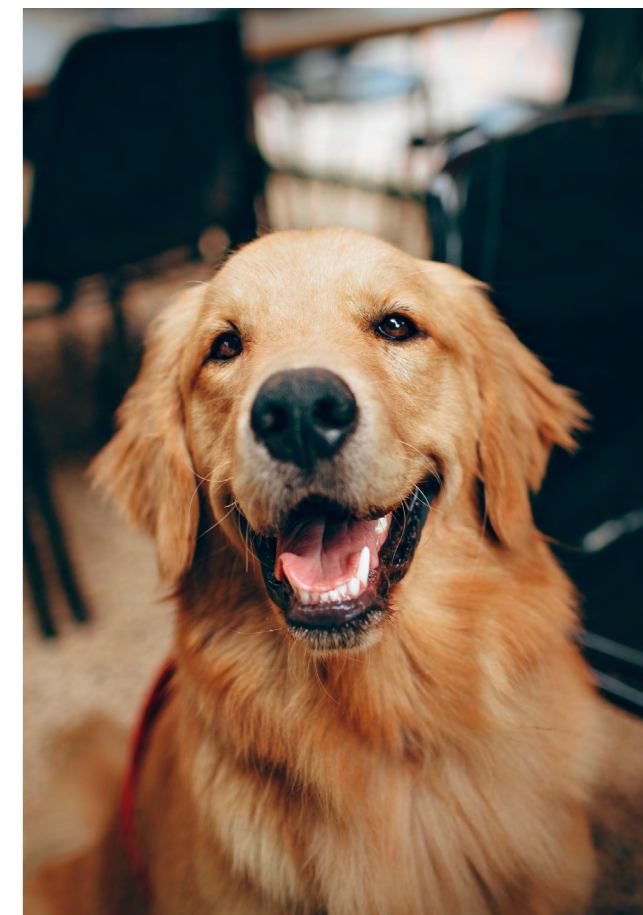
Your hobby may also be something that you do with other people, such as football, dance lessons, group exercise classes. These hobbies would mean that you are doing something you enjoy, something you are good at, and having face to face interactions with people. After a long period of not being allowed to see people due to Covid 19, lots of us are desperate for that human interaction.

7 Care for others

As mentioned above, as humans we crave other human interaction, it is how we are made. We need to have relationships with others to have good mental health. Caring for others is an important part of having relationships with others and keeping relationships. It brings you closer together.

When you spend time with your friends, you will feel the change in your mood while you are with them and when you leave them. With friends it is a 2 way street - they help you feel better and you help them as well.

Caring for a pet can improve your mental wellbeing too. The bond can be just as strong as between 2 people as it can between you and a pet. Along with that, looking after a pet can bring structure to your day and act as a link to other people. For instance, lots of people find that they make friends by chatting to other dog walkers.



8 Ask for help

None of us are superhuman, we will all feel tired, overwhelmed, exhausted at some point. If you are struggling to cope with your feelings when things are going wrong, then you must ask for help. This can mean asking friends and family for support, or speaking to a professional.

Asking for help can sometimes be one of the hardest things we do. It can feel like we have failed and we can't look after ourselves. This is not the case at all! We are all entitled to struggle at times. Life is hard and can be particularly challenging, so if you feel you need to ask for help then you have not failed, you are being brave by accepting that things are hard at the moment.

There might be local support you could join locally now that restrictions have eased. These would help you to talk about how you are feeling and meet new people who are also feeling the same way you are. Speaking to your GP will mean that they can guide you to places for counselling, or also can offer medication if you feel that is right for you.

9 Love yourself

This is key to looking after our mental health as this will allow us to have good self-esteem. There are too many things that we can see now on social media platforms or in the news that can make us feel bad about ourselves and the way we look or act or dress. It is vital to remember that we are all different. Some of us are better at cooking than others, some people are better at sport, some people are taller. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else.

Loving yourself and having good self-esteem will boost your confidence.



10 Say no

We all want to be able to be the perfect partner, parent and work colleague. This can then lead us to accept too much and take on too much which can lead to anxiety, stress, feeling overwhelmed, and running ourselves into the ground, as well as sometimes developing bad coping techniques. Most of the time we find ourselves saying yes because we're worried someone will get angry or treat us differently if we say no. But, saying no once in a while doesn't make you a bad person at all.

When you say no, be assertive about it, but not rude. You also don't have to give a reason if you don't want to, but you can give a 'because' if you feel it will help, but try not to go into too much detail. You can also just say no because you need some downtime for your own mental health.

We all go through periods of additional stress and busyness, this is normal in life. But maybe start asking yourself if a particular job, or responding to emails, attending an event, is the most important thing you need to do, or is it more important to have some downtime for your mental health. The beauty of saying no sometimes means that you are looking after your mental health and it also means that when you feel like you have better mental wellbeing in general, you're able to manage those busy periods better.

WHAT TO DO IF FEELING OVERWHELMED

It's good to understand what overwhelm looks and feels like so you can spot and see when it's something you might be struggling with. It may present itself in lots of different ways such as feeling ill or fatigued or emotional reactions to situations that aren't warranted. Or it might present itself in memory loss or feelings of confusion and even withdrawing from family and friends.

The term 'overwhelmed' has been used frequently to describe our emotions when we are feeling like there is just too much on our plates and too much to get our head around. It can also be when our body is responding to a traumatic incident. It is also not just a mental health challenge that we need to overcome, it can also have major effects on our physical health.

Overwhelm is not just something we need to overcome when it comes to our mental health but can also have detrimental effects on our physical health too. We can forget to take care of ourselves or feel that other things need to be prioritised.

This includes skipping self-care such as washing, dental hygiene, eating the correct food or skipping meals completely.

Writing things down will clear your head of thoughts and emotions and it will immediately let out your thoughts from that moment.



The key to overwhelm is clearing the mind, letting go of some worries and relieving the pressure. Writing things down will clear your head of thoughts and emotions and it will immediately let out your thoughts from that moment. Approach things by doing one thing at a time and try to focus on one thing at a time in priority order where necessary.

Breathing plays a massive part in helping to relieve feelings of anxiety and stress. Deep breathing exercises are a great way to promote relaxation and lower your stress response.

WELLBEING PLAN

The purpose of a wellbeing plan is to identify the possible stressors within your life, at home or at work, and to think about helpful ways to approach these. It may be something that you do to help, or something you need someone else to do. You can refer to as you need it as a reminder of what you know works for you to help ease the feelings of stress. It may be something that you create and share with your family, friends or even your manager.

Everyone can complete a wellbeing plan. You don't need to have a mental health problem in order to feel the benefits. What it means is that you already have practical steps in place to ensure you are supported when you aren't feeling great.

How you create and implement your plan is entirely individual and up to you but to help we have given an example layout opposite.

What were my positives from last week?		What do I need to remind myself to do this week?	
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Situation	What will my triggers be?	Signs to look for	What can I do to overcome these?	Who else could help me?
Work				
Work				
Work				
Work				
Home				
Home				
Home				
Home				



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE

It can be hard for our young people to talk about their mental health. Life can be so overwhelming, for adults but also for our young people because young people might not understand their feelings or why they feel so down or overwhelmed at times. There are some ways in which you can support the young people in your life and to help get them talking.

1 Think About What To Say

Write things down before having the conversation to help keep to the topic. It could be written in words, or even a picture can help to stimulate conversation. Think about what to say beforehand to help you feel more prepared and confident. For some young people, talking might be too much so maybe write a letter, or an email or Whatsapp. As long as it helps to get the conversation going, it doesn't matter how it is started.

2 What Do You Want To Happen

Think about what you would like the outcome of the conversation to be. What is the end goal? What do you want to achieve or them to achieve? You might not know what you want to achieve, but having a few ideas will help when you talk to them.

3 Where To Talk

If you are worried about having the conversation then think about where you are going to bring it up. Sometimes bringing up the conversation during an activity is helpful as there is something else to add a small distraction. These could be whilst driving in the car, walking a dog or washing dishes. Activities that require little eye contact can help to make the conversation more comfortable, for both parties.



4 Silence Is Acceptable

Talking about feelings and emotions and mental health can be difficult for everyone, including the person talking, and the person starting the conversation. It is perfectly acceptable to have silence during these conversations. Try not to fill gaps in the conversation. Instead, use this time to gather your thoughts and ideas, and the other person will be able to do the same.

5 Continue To Talk

Maybe you have tried to start the conversation once and it didn't quite go the way you needed/wanted it to, or maybe the young person was unresponsive and didn't want to open up at that time. If you feel the conversation is incomplete then ensure you try again. It is important that we everyone keeps talking and being honest about feelings and emotions.

8 Offer Support, Not Solutions

When starting the conversation about mental health, you might not know what is the best solution to the problems that arise. The young person who you are trying to help might not want an answer, but instead just someone to talk to. Be that person and show them where they can get further support, possibly from professionals.

WORKING FROM HOME: HOW TO KEEP A HEALTHY WORK / LIFE BALANCE

Trying to balance our work and personal lives can be a challenge and always has been. There are constant demands all around us and we can feel as if we are being pulled in both directions. It can be hard to try to distinguish between work and life, especially with lots of us now working from home. There is no clear and easy answer to create, and importantly keep, a healthy work/life balance but there are some things we can do to try our best to get that balance right.

Lots of us will have an idea in our mind of what a perfect work/life balance would be. It will include getting lots of things done at work and ticked off our to-do list, and then coming home to spend quality time with our loved ones. The truth is, this isn't always possible. It might actually be that some days your focus is more on work and then other days you might prioritise family time. Don't try to have a perfect work/life balance, try to have a realistic one.

It is important to try to implement time management strategies. Look at your to-do list, at work and home, and cut out tasks that have little value. Lots of us have certain times of the day when we are more productive and this should be when we try to complete the more difficult tasks. Set your goals and priorities and try to stick to them.

There is something called 'burnout' and this is caused by overworking. With lots of people working from home it can be difficult to switch off as we are able to check our work computer and email etc. Setting clear boundaries is important to prevent overworking and make sure your colleagues and managers know when you are happy to be contacted and when not, and these should be respected.

It is important to remember that although your job is important, it isn't your life. Before you got this job, you were an individual with hobbies and it is important to still remain that person. You should ensure you still make time to do things that make you happy. Also, you should not neglect your personal relationships. Set aside that time for your children, partners or other loved ones.

Again, with lots of us working from home at the moment, we need to make sure that the area we are working in is right for us. Make sure you have a suitable desk or chair to allow for comfortable working time. If you can, try to make this work space separate from your home life. This is hard when the only space you have is your dining table, but maybe clear and put away your laptop or paperwork so that you can't see it in the evening when you have finished working.

It is essential that you set aside time during the day where you will take a break. You might not have time everyday to get up and leave your desk for a tea or coffee, but ensure you have a lunch break. Try to get up from your desk or workspace to do this to ensure it is a proper break from work, even if it is only for 30 minutes.

It is important to remember that although your job is important, it isn't your life.



5 A DAY FOR A FIT BRAIN

We are all very aware that we are recommended to eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day to help keep our bodies healthy, but what about our minds?

Here we have our 5 a day for your mind, things to think about every day to help your wellbeing and mental health stay on track too.

1 Connect



We spend a lot of time on social media now a days so we feel we are connected to people but this is talking about connecting more personally with someone close. When you get a break from work maybe send a message or video call a family member just to have a chat and see how they are. This lets them know that you are thinking about them and you will connect with them on a deeper level compared to just on social media.

2 Get outside



No one is going to feel mentally healthy if they have been stuck in the same room all day and evening. This is especially true more now a days with lots of people working from home. It is important to have a change of scenery during the day and to have some time outside in the fresh air. This will help to alleviate any tension, stress or anxiety you might be feeling. Nature and fresh air plays a massive part in our battle against mental health issues.

3 Take notice



So much happens around us that we don't realise or have time to see due to work and other commitments. But you can feed your soul by slowing down and seeing the beauty of the world around you. Listen to the birdsong, feel the rain on your face or the warmth of the sun on your skin.

4 Listen to music



It has been proven that listening to music can help our mental well-being. It is a portable way to refocus and reconnect and shut out the world, even if just for the time it takes to listen to one song.

5 Be creative



Atleast once a day try to be creative and express yourself. This can be in many forms and not everyone feels the need to express in the same way, however as long as you are creating, whether that is baking, singing, drawing, writing or even gardening, you are also using your body and centring yourself further.

LOOKING OUT FOR OTHERS

It can be very difficult to see someone who you care about becoming mentally unwell, but small, everyday actions can make the biggest difference to someone who is battling mental health challenges. **If you know someone has been unwell then don't be afraid to ask them how they are doing, they may not choose to open up to you and talk, but just asking them shows that you are there to listen. By spending time with loved ones you are showing that you care.**

You might be able to look out for them by keeping track of medication or joining them at doctors appointments so you can remind them what has been said. Encourage them to have a regular sleep and exercise pattern. Completing everyday tasks for them such as washing, cleaning and cooking will ease that pressure off them until they are ready to take it back again.

If you are not a sufferer of mental health it can be hard to understand the thoughts and feelings that your loved one is experiencing. You have to try to not be judgmental and remember that they aren't choosing to feel or act like this. They are still themselves and still have their same likes as before and they will not want to be defined by their mental health problems. Look out for them by keeping doing the things you have always done together and treat them with respect.



SPOT THE SIGNS - HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING

We all know how to spot the signs if we ourselves are struggling as we know our bodies and minds and know when something is different. But how do we spot if someone we love is struggling? It is important to recognise the signs in others so that we are able

1 Feeling anxious or worried

We all get worried or stressed from time to time but constant anxiety and worry and fear could be the sign of a mental health disorder. Particularly if it is affecting the person being able to go about their daily life.

Symptoms of anxiety may include:

- heart palpitations
- shortness of breath
- headache
- Sweating
- trembling
- feeling dizzy
- restlessness
- diarrhoea
- racing mind

2 Frequently feeling very down

If the person is frequently feeling down or low then they may be suffering with Depression.

Signs of depression include:

- being sad or irritable for the last few weeks or more
- lacking in motivation and energy
- losing interest in a hobby
- being teary all the time.

3 Emotional outbursts

Everyone has different moods and everyone is allowed to be upset and show it or be angry and tell people, but sudden and dramatic changes in mood can be a symptom of mental illness. These outbursts can include sudden distress or unnecessary panic. They might be anger outbursts where the person doesn't know what they are doing.

4 Sleep problems

Long lasting changes to a person's sleep patterns could be a symptom of many mental health disorders. If the person is suffering with insomnia, for example, this could be a sign of anxiety whereas sleeping too much or too little could indicate depression.

5 Weight or appetite changes

Constant fluctuating weight or rapid weight loss could be one of the warning signs of a mental health disorder such as depression. It would also be an indicator of an eating disorder.

6 Quiet or withdrawn

If a friend or loved one is regularly isolating themselves they may have depression or other mental health issues such as bipolar disorder or a psychotic disorder. Refusing to join in social activities, not responding to messages or talking may be a sign they need help.

7 Substance abuse

Using substances such as alcohol or drugs to cope can be a sign of mental health conditions but also using substances can contribute to mental illness.

8 Feeling guilty or worthless

Thoughts like 'I've failed', 'This is my fault' or 'I'm worthless' are all possible signs of depression. If the person is frequently criticising or blaming themselves and expressing that then this is a sign they need help. When these feelings are severe the person may express a feeling to hurt or kill themselves (suicidal).

9 Changes in behaviour or feelings

If someone is suffering from a mental health disorder the symptoms may start out as subtle changes to a person's feelings, thinking and behaviour. Ongoing and significant changes could be a sign that they have or are developing a mental health disorder.



LISTENING TIPS

If someone you know or love decides to open up to you about their mental health, that is a big step. They need your support and asking for it can be difficult. If they decide to take this step then there are ways that you can listen to support them.

1

Set a time and have no distractions

It is important that if the person you love opens up to you, then you provide an open and non-judgemental space. It is also vital that you have the conversation with no distractions. We can easily be distracted by things going on around us, but this is a time that you need to focus on what is happening.

2

Let them share what they want

Let the person who is sharing their feelings lead the discussion, and at their own pace. Talking can take a lot of trust and courage, especially when you are feeling vulnerable about your mental health. The case might be that you are the first person they have been able to talk to about this. You should not put pressure on them, just listen, and they will tell you how much or how little they want to or feel ready to.

3

Ask open ended questions

Try to keep your language neutral when you are talking. Offer them chances to open up about their feelings instead of telling them how they feel. When you ask a question, give the person time to answer and try not to then overwhelm them with too many things to think about.

4

Don't try to assume what is wrong

While you may be happy to listen to them and to talk, you should not try to work out what the problem is. The chances are that you are not a medical professional or councillor so you should not try to tell them what's wrong. Listen to what they say and take it on board.

5

Listen carefully

As they are talking, at times during the conversation, repeat what they have said back to them. This will show them you have been listening and also they will be able to add or correct you if you have not understood them. While they are talking, you do not need to agree with them or what they are saying, but listening shows that you are respecting it.

6

Talk about wellbeing

The person facing their mental health challenges may not be aware of how to support their wellbeing at that moment. Speak to them about self-care and ways in which they can help themselves immediately. Emphasise the importance of exercising, having a healthy diet and getting a good night's sleep.

7

Explain where they can get help

The first place for help you should direct them is to their GP as they will be able offer professional help such as services or medication. You could suggest that they talk to another friend or family member. There is a list of websites and charities at the end of this guide that can offer guidance and support as well.



THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

There are different ways to help you deal with thoughts of suicide and they are to think about how you can help yourself now, how you can emotional and professional support.

Thinking about the in the now is the first and most important step if you are having suicidal thoughts. This is not a decision to be made in the moment, and it can be left until tomorrow or next week or next month if you still feel the way you do. Just focus on getting through the current day, rather than thinking about the future and what is going to happen. You need to think about your triggers (or the other person's triggers if not yourself) and how you can remove them immediately or avoid them in the future. These might be songs, pictures, places or people. Encourage having a safe space, this could be a bedroom, a friend's house, a place of workshop etc. This would allow the person struggling to feel calm and try to gather their feelings and begin to gain control again.

Gaining emotional support will come from talking to people, **there is always someone who will listen**. This could be from friends and family or other places such as crisis lines, places of worship or teachers.

Professional help will be needed if the feelings of suicide are not going away. If you, or someone you know is seriously struggling then a visit to the GP will be necessary. They will be able to discuss options further, and give their recommendations of what they think is best. You can call 111 (or 999 if there is immediate danger to life) for professional advice out of doctor surgery hours. There are charities that offer help, support and guidance and can be found at the end of this guide.

Strategies that help people who are suffering from suicidal thoughts are to create a crisis plan and/or crisis box. A crisis plan is a plan that you can read and follow when you find yourself at an extremely low point. It will remind you what you can do, and who you can call on, to help. It should have a list of people's names and contact numbers who can help you. It can also list the things to look forward to and things that make you happy as an immediate reminder.

A crisis box is somewhere to store items that make you happy, and you can call on it when you feel stressed or anxious, or suicidal. These can be any happy triggers such as a song, book, photograph, cuddly toy favourite sweets etc.



GETTING HELP



OXFORD CBT
www.oxfordcbt.co.uk
☎ 01865 920077

Oxford CBT provide a service that assesses people quickly, and provides high-quality evidence based treatments and courses that are designed to improve quality of life. They offer support for children, young adults and adults in face to face sessions and online. They also have a blog which addresses a wide variety of mental health issues.



NHS
www.nhs.uk/mental-health

If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed the NHS have a list of possible symptoms you might be showing and suggestions for things to do that can help. It also offers help in situations such as mental health at work, therapies and counselling.



MIND
www.mind.org.uk
☎ 0300 123 3393

MIND provide support and guidance to give strength to anyone who is suffering a mental health problem. They aim to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. They want people to understand their condition and the choices that are available to them.



YOUNG MINDS
www.youngminds.org.uk

For Parents:

Call for free on 0808 802 5544 (9:30am – 4pm, Mon – Fri).

Email using Parents Helpline contact form

Use live Parents webchat service (9:30am – 4pm, Mon – Fri)

For young people:

Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.

If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.

This website offers support for children and young people with their mental health. If you have a child or young person in your life that you are concerned about, this website can offer guidance on how best to help them.

Anxiety UK

ANXIETY UK

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

☎ 03444 775 774 (Mon to Fri 9.30am to 5.30pm)

Text: 07537 416905

Anxiety UK is a website offering support packages for a yearly cost (wide variety of packages are available) which offer one to one therapy sessions, access to a community of other people with the same experiences, helpful resources that can help to understand and overcome anxiety.



RESTORE

www.restore.org.uk

☎ 01865 455821

An Oxford based mental health charity that supports people in their recovery of mental health problems and offers training and coaching and recovery group sessions to aid this. They help re-established habits to help you to continue to feel well after a mental health setback.



BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOURAL AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

babcp.com

BABCP is the lead organisation for CBT in the UK and Ireland. This website is guidance for therapists working in this area, people who have had CBT or undergoing CBT or for people who are just interested in what CBT is.

SAMARITANS

SAMARITANS

www.samaritans.org

☎ 116 123

Vastly known in the mental health industry are the Samaritans who offer lots of ways to contact them in a moment of need. They offer guidance on what to do if you personally are having a difficult time, or if someone you know is struggling.

happify™

HAPPIFY

www.happify.com

This website offers useful and effective strategies and exercises to help overcome mental health problems. Through using these exercises it helps you shift to a more positive state of mind and overcome negativity.



THE HAPPINESS TRAP

thehappinesstrap.com

An 8 week online programme proven to create real change by completing 1 to 2 hours a week of easy to learn skills and strategies



