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Wellbeing:
Exploring Mental Health

What is mental health?

We all have mental health. Just like we all have physical health. This doesn't mean we all have mental or physical health *problems*, though a lot of us will to varying degrees.

Your mental health can be thought of in terms of:

- How we feel about ourselves and the people around us
- Our ability to make and keep friends and relationships
- Our ability to learn from others and develop emotionally

Taking care of your mental health

From time to time, our mental health might not be so great. This could be down to stress and anxiety about what's going on at school or at home, and could lead to you not feeling yourself.

Some level of stress is totally normal; being nervous about exams coming up or falling out with a friend, for example.

There are lots you can do if you're feeling this kind of stress; taking good care of yourself and doing some mindfulness exercises can help.

What is mental illness?

Mental illness are disorders of brain function. They can have many causes, some of which are unclear.

There is nothing embarrassing about having a mental illness; it's not something you choose or that happens because you've failed at something.

We're going to explore some common mental health illnesses, their symptoms, and how they're treated.

What are some common mental health conditions?

The spectrum of mental health conditions is as vast as physical health. Some conditions you might be familiar with are stress, anxiety, depression and panic disorder.

The trick here is being able to spot signs of these in yourself (and even your friends!) and accessing the right support to help you feel better.

Depression

- Depression is an illness that can interfere with your ability to handle daily activities, like sleeping, eating or managing your school work.
- Signs of depression: feeling sad, anxious or 'empty' for a long time, feeling hopeless or irritable, constant tiredness, withdrawing from friends and family, and losing interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities you used to enjoy.
- It's common, but it doesn't mean it's not serious, and it can happen at any age.
- You can't just 'snap out of it'; most people with depression need treatment to get better.
- Treatments can be talking therapies, tablets, or a combination of the two.

Anxiety Disorders

- There are several types of anxiety disorder, including generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder and phobia-related disorders.
- Symptoms of GAD include: feeling restless, wound-up, being easily fatigued, having difficulty concentrating, being irritable, difficulty controlling feelings of worry, trouble sleeping.
- Treatments for GAD can be Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), medication, or a combination of both.

Panic Disorder

- People with panic disorder have recurrent and unexpected panic attacks.
- These are sudden periods of intense fear that come on quickly and reach their peak within minutes.
- Symptoms of a panic attack include: a pounding heartbeat, sweating, trembling or shaking, feelings of shortness of breath, smothering or choking, feelings of doom or being out of control.
- Treatment for panic disorder can be talking therapies (like CBT), medication, or a combination of both.

What can I manage myself, and when should I seek help?

Some low-level stress is normal, we know that. But if you feel long periods of low mood or irritability, or you feel like you're struggling to cope with anything, speak to a trusted adult. This could be a parent, teacher or your GP.

It's far better to have an open conversation with someone else about it, than keep your feelings inside.

You can then access any support you need, and feel much better!

You've got a friend in me...

What to do if you think a friend is suffering with a mental health condition:

- Speak to your friend. Are they worried or sad about something in particular? Does talking it through help, or do they feel no better?
- Speak to a trusted adult about it. They'll be able to help your friend access the right support.
- Stay in touch with your friend. They might not feel like going out or socialising, but your support is important for them.

Mental illness doesn't discriminate!

Anyone, from any background, with any amount of money in the bank can have issues with mental health.

A quick search online brings up many of our favourite celebrities who have been open about their battles with mental health conditions.



Organisations that help - Websites

Suicide / Feeling Helpless	Youngminds.org.uk / Papyrus-uk.org / childline.org.uk
Staying safe online	Thinkuknow.co.uk / ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/
Sexuality / Homophobia	Youngstonewall.org.uk / bgiok.org.uk / eachaction.org.uk
Sexual Abuse	Rapecrisis.org.uk / Childline.org.uk
Self-harm	Youngminds.org.uk / selfharm.co.uk / childline.org.uk
Physical / emotional abuse	Childline.org.uk / Youngminds.org.uk
Bullying	Bullybusters.org.uk / childline.org.uk / bullying.co.uk
Anxiety / Panic attacks	Childline.org.uk / themix.org.uk / youngminds.org.uk
Eating disorders	Beateatingdisorders.org.uk / Childline.org.uk
Info about local services for young people	youthaccess.org.uk

Organisations that help – Phone numbers

Childline (up to age 19)	0800 1111
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Family Lives	0808 800 2222
Frank (Substance Support)	0300 123 6600
Beat - Eating Disorders	0808 801 0711
Sexual Health Line	0300 123 7123
Rape Crisis	0808 802 9999
Victim Support	0845 3030 900
Forced Marriage Unit	0207 008 0151
Karma Nirvana (Honour-based Abuse)	0800 599 9247
The Mix	0808 808 4994
Stonewall	0800 050 2020

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