

# MENTAL HEALTH ATWORK

Helping you and your employees manage mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic.



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of our 100,000 first aiders rate us as excellent

98%



### **Mental Health at Work**

### Welcome to 'Mental Health at Work: Coronavirus Support'

Working together with our accredited mental health trainers, SkillBase First Aid have put together this free guide looking at some key ideas for managing positive mental health, selfcare and wellbeing at work. Using various strategies and techniques we look at how you can better understand your mental health and support those around you.

We have all felt the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic since March 2020 in some way. Hearing again and again that we are living in 'uncertain and unprecedented times', only serves to remind us daily that everything looks very different to our lives before.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide while the demand for mental health support in UK services such as Citizen Advice, MIND, Samaritans, Anxiety UK and Rethink Mental Illness is increasing.\*

\*World Health Organisation and Public Health England 2020

The Centre for Mental Health report in October 2020 predicted that up to 10 million people, almost 20% of the UK population, will need either new or additional mental health support as a direct consequence of the crisis.

As we navigate various transitions over the coming months and years, we are likely to come across many more people who are struggling. It is very likely those people are friends, family and colleagues.

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# On average in the UK, we spend 1/3 of our lives at work

We know that many of us are worrying about our current situation around Coronavirus and how it affects our work lives.

Many of us may be working from home for longer periods of time or as key workers may be on the front line. Therefore, it is important we recognise how this affects our mental health and wellbeing and what we can do to ensure we are taking care of ourselves and others.

We have put together this guide to give practical examples of what you can do to support both yourself and your colleagues in response to the pandemic.

We all have mental health and supporting everyone's wellbeing throughout this period is more important than ever.

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A healthy workplace is one where employees and managers work together to protect and promote their health, safety and wellbeing for the sustainability of the business.

> World Health Organisation (WHO)



### **Mental Health at Work**

# 4 in 4 of us have mental health- yes you read that right!



Of people will be affected by mental illness at some point in their lives



Of UK employees feel unable to disclose mental health problems to their employer



Of people with a diagnosable mental illness receive no treatment at all.

#### What is mental health?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) definition: 'Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make contributions to her and his community'.

Mental health is a part of our overall health, it includes;

- How we think, feel, and behave
- How we cope with the ups and downs of everyday life
- How we feel about ourselves and our life
- How we see ourselves and our future
- How we deal with negative things that happen in our life

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- Our self-esteem or confidence
- How stress affects us





# **MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK**

### **Culture at Work**

The good news is...

...you can make a huge difference by making small changes in the workplace

A positive workplace culture improves teamwork, raises the morale, increases productivity and efficiency, and enhances retention of the workforce. Job satisfaction, collaboration, and work performance are all enhanced. And, most importantly, a positive workplace environment reduces stress in employees.

# In order to support our mental health, our workplaces need to have:

- **Flexibility** this can be in terms of working hours, working from home, deadlines, fitting in wellbeing meetings and adapting to what our employees need
- **Autonomy** allowing employees to shape their work environment so they can perform to the best of their ability
- Positive work culture focus on what is good

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- **Strong sense of belonging and trust** do your colleagues trust you? What does it mean to trust someone? If we trusted eachother more, how would that make a difference in the workplace?
- A safe place to feel confident in having honest conversations knowing that we won't be ridiculed or ignored when we are honest about our mental health and wellbeing, as well as a literal safe place to have the conversations away from others
- WAP wellness action plans across the team see templates from MIND here
- Education and training embedding <u>Mental Health First Aider's</u> in the workplace and educating the wider team in mental health awareness will help to create a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing, knowing we feel supported and heard at work helps us to feel happier
- **Empowerment** don't rescue! Empower your employees through education and training so they can take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

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## Signs & symptoms

#### The good news is...

...you can make a huge difference by making small changes in the workplace

#### Workplace signs and symptoms of mental health decline

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Learning about developing symptoms, or early warning signs, and taking action can help. Early intervention can help reduce the severity of an illness. It may even be possible to delay or prevent a major mental illness altogether. it is important to remember everyone is different and may not exhibit signs and symptoms in the same way, here are just a few examples of workplace specific signs:

- Decreased productivity you may notice an employee is not working at their usual 'normal' productive level
- Changes in morale and attitude to work you may notice an employee becomes more negative than they usually are, or not seem to care like they used to. This can also go the other way, noticing they may be over the top and appear stressed about work
- **Absenteeism** when an employee is taking more time off than usual, using physical symptoms as reasons rather than being honest about needing a mental health day
- **Presenteeism** when an employee is present at work but not able to carry on their normal duties. Someone may be physically at their desk but not being able to be productive
- Change in appearance/personal hygiene someone may appear different to their 'norm', could be unkept or messy. They may stop wearing make-up or appear unshaven. This can also go the other way where someone may over do-it to mask how they are really feeling 'putting on a face'
- Frequent complaints of being tired all the time, or unexplained aches and pains you may notice someone mentioning how they are feeling physically, be it fatigue or pain, if it is becoming more often and more pronounced this could be linked to their overall health and wellbeing
- Withdrawing you may notice an employee seem to withdraw where they may have once been vocal in a meeting they are now not contributing or avoiding connection with others
- Emotions are high someone may be easily triggered and produce an emotional reaction a lot quicker than they may have previously, when our stress levels are high and we are feeling vulnerable we may be less able to control our emotions
- Alcohol and/or other drug misuse you may become aware of someone's substance intake or increased alcohol intake
- Most importantly! If there has been any change in the person as a colleague or an employer you are sometimes best placed to notice a change in someone. If you don't know your employees or team well, get to know them!

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### How to start a conversation

#### How to start a conversation in the workplace

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Before we start a conversation with someone that we may have noticed some signs and symptoms in, take time to check in with your own behaviours. How is your mental health? How do you cope with ups and downs? What helps you in times of difficulty? This doesn't mean it's the right answer for them but it helps put you in a place of empathy.

- **Don't focus on sympathy, in fact avoid it** sympathy only serves to bring the conversation round to you, your point of view and your own experiences
- **People need your empathy** Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position. Watch this fantastic explanation of empathy vs sympathy from Brené Brown <u>here</u>
- **Genuine connection** when someone shares their emotional distress with you, genuine connection is what the person needs, not solutions, advice or avoidance
- **Non-judgemental** keep any judgements that come up to yourself, you risk shaming the person who has opened up and stop them from opening up again
- **Be kind and caring** a simple one! Keep positive regard for the person who is sharing, enter the conversation from a good place and keep kindness throughout
- It's ok to have a different opinion we all have our own opinions and that's ok, it's how we express them and knowing the difference between a good time to voice them and when not to
- Explore your own fears you may feel worried or anxious in starting a conversation because of your own fears. Try to think about what those fears are and name them to the person eg "You might think this is none of my business" or "I am worried you might take this the wrong way". Entering the conversation this way lets the person know you care, have thought about them and tells them what you have noticed giving them the opportunity to say yes that's correct, or no you've got it wrong.

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# Useful questions to ask

#### Useful questions when approaching someone

- How are you today? Ask twice! 'how are you' is common language in our culture, we use it as a greeting so we often do not think about how we are *actually* doing, instead answering with 'good' or 'fine'. Try asking someone again how they really are and you may be able to get to a deeper level and find out if they are struggling
- I've noticed a few changes "I've noticed some changes in you recently and wanted to see how you were doing?" Ask this from your place of empathy, being kind and caring will help to produce a genuine response
- I've been thinking about you lately maybe you know someone has been going through something in their personal life or they have had a lot of work on recently. Starting with a kind statement of "I've been thinking about what you have been going through and wanted to check in on you"
- Covid-19 has made me feel anxious, how about you? starting a conversation by sharing your worries can help the person feel safe to share back. We are going through a collective anxiety with the pandemic at the moment so we can connect on this

#### Useful questions to progress conversations

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- **Empathic statements** "Gosh that sounds really tough..." "I can only begin to imagine how tough that must be..." These tell the person you are keeping the conversation about them, not making it about you, which helps the person feel heard and listened to
- Fact finding "How long have you felt like this/been experiencing these symptoms?" "What impact do they have on your day-to-day life?"
- **Reflective questions** "Have you felt like this/experienced this or something similar before?" The emphasis stays on the person talking not us so we need to step in to a curious mindset. If you have a suggestion, turn it into a question. "When you felt similar in the past what did you do that helped you?"
- Forward planning questions "If you could choose 1 small thing to do today/this week that would have a positive impact on how you feel, what would that be?" "What do you need right now to support you through this?" "Who do you know and trust to turn to for support?" If you feel stuck for words you can say "I don't know what to say, I'm just really glad you told me"

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#### Setting healthy boundaries for conversations

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#### "You teach people how to treat you by what you allow, what you stop and what you reinforce."

Before we start a conversation with someone who we may have noticed some signs and symptoms in, take time to check in with your own behaviours. How is your mental health? How do you cope with ups and downs? What helps you in times of difficulty? This doesn't mean it's the right answer for them but it helps put you in a place of empathy.

- Are you rescuing the person? Is it to make you feel better or is it genuinely for the greater good of the person?
- **Communicate clearly** set limits such as allocated times you are available to have a conversation and communicate these clearly.
- **Be consistent** for example if you have arranged a conversation with someone at work for half an hour, stick to the time allowance and keep it to half an hour for the next time
- Be time-efficient it's ok to have a conversation when it is best for you both
- **Be assertive and caring** remember to be kind and caring using your empathic responses and questions. It's still ok to be assertive and put in place the structure of the meeting, timings etc.
- **Empower the person** focus on putting the responsibility of the person's wellbeing to the person. This empowerment is helpful for both of you. You do not need to write a list of solutions and give it to them, to enable them to follow through and find helpful solutions it is best they come up with these themselves, this is in line with guidance from your open questioning and fact-finding
- **Role model** make sure you role model positive mental health and promote self-care and wellbeing not just for your team but for yourself too
- **Create structure** if you are arranging a meeting, write an agenda, use a wellness action plan and try to gently give purpose to the conversation

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# STRESS AND SELF-CARE



Stress is something everyone feels at times. There are all kinds of stressful situations that can be a part of daily life. Low-level stress can even be helpful or motivational.

#### What is stress?

At the most basic level, stress is our body's response to pressures from a situation or life event. What contributes to stress can vary hugely from person to person and differs according to our social and economic circumstances. Some common features of things that can make us feel stress include experiencing something new or unexpected, something that threatens your feeling of self, or feeling you have little control over a situation.

# This is why stress is something many more of us may have felt acutely becuase of the uncertainty of the pandemic.

#### What happens when we are stressed?

When we encounter stress, our body is stimulated to produce stress hormones that trigger a 'flight or fight' response and activate our immune system. This response helps us to respond quickly to dangerous situations. Sometimes, this stress response can be an appropriate, or even beneficial reaction. The resulting feeling of 'pressure' can help us to push through situations that can be nerve-wracking or intense, like running a marathon, or giving a speech to a large crowd. We can quickly return to a resting state without any negative effects on our health if what is stressing us is short-lived.

Many people are able to deal with a certain level of stress without any lasting effects. However, there can be times when stress becomes excessive and too much to deal with. If our stress response is activated repeatedly, or it persists over time, the effects can result in wear and tear on the body and can cause us to feel permanently in a state of 'fight or flight'. This pressure can make us feel overwhelmed or unable to cope, over a long period of time this can impact on both our physical and mental health.

#### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

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- Feeling overwhelmed, irritable, fearful or anxious
- Racing thoughts and constant worrying
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Headaches, muscle tension or pain, dizziness
- Sleep problems

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- Eating too much or too little
- Stomach pain or nausea



# **HOW TO MANAGE STRESS**

You can't always prevent stress, but there are lots of things you can do to manage stress better. First and foremost, don't be too hard on yourself and take time to realise the causes of your stress, what you can do to help and what is out of your control.

#### **SPLIT UP BIG TASKS**

If a task seems overwhelming and difficult to start, try breaking it down into easier chunks, and give yourself credit for completing them.

#### ALLOW TIME FOR POSITIVITY

Take time to think about the good things in your life. Each day, consider what went well and try to list 3 things you're thankful for.

#### MINDFULNESS

Try some mindfulness techniques. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment.

#### **KEEP ACTIVE**

Being active can help you to burn off nervous energy. It will not make your stress disappear, but it can make it less intense.

#### TALK TO SOMEONE

Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling.

#### **PLAN AHEAD**

Planning out any upcoming stressful days or events – a to-do list, the journey you need to do, things you need to take – can really help.



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# GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Grounding techniques help by turning attention away from thoughts, anxieties, or worries, and refocusing on the present moment.

# 5 things you can see

Try 3,2,1 que

Look for small details, such as a pattern on the ceiling or an object you've not noticed before

# things you can feel

Notice the feeling of your clothing or a breeze or sun against your skin, pick up an object and examine how it feels

# things you can hear

A ticking clock, a dinstant sound of traffic, birds chirping or the wind in the trees

# things you can smell

Try to notice smells around you, could be a candle, perfume, something cooking or freshly mowed grass

# thing you can taste

Could be chewing gum, the lunch you just ate, a sweet treat. Notice where you can taste the flavour the strongest in your mouth.





4

3

2

1

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# SELF-CARE PUTTING YOU FIRST!

Self-care is known as the practice of consciously doing things that preserve or improve your mental or physical health. To be able to support our colleagues and our employees, we must first be able to take care of ourselves. This is what we mean when we say 'You cannot pour from an empty cup!'

#### **SLEEP**

Sleep can have a huge effect on how you feel both physically and emotionally so think about how you can improve your sleep routine. This could be keeping to more regular sleep hours, cutting down on caffeine or creating a more restful sleep environment.

#### **EXERCISE**

Whether this is a walk around the block, a youtube yoga video or a full on workout, try to move more and enjoy the feeling of being active. Being more active will also help you sleep better.

#### EAT WELL

We know that eating well and keeping a balanced diet helps us to feel healthy, but now and again selfcare can mean a treat, don't make yourself feel guilty for enjoying a pudding!

Everything in moderation.

#### SAY NO!

Learn how to say no! Many of us feel obligated to say yes to things that take up our time or energy. Learn how to put yourself first and politely say no to things that may affect the amount of time you have to devote to your own self-care.

#### GO SOLO

Reading, watching a series, having a bath, going for a walk, cooking, knitting or just sitting in a quiet room...whatever it is you enjoy to do alone, make sure you put it in your self-care schedule.

#### SCHEDULE

Schedule your self-care. We all find it hard to find a little extra time, so look for small ways you can incorporate it into everyday life, eg wake up 15 minutes earlier to sit with a cup of tea and practice some deep breathing, or take a walk round the block on a lunch break.



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# **MY SELF-CARE ROUTINE THIS** WEEK

Something to read or watch...

Something active...

Something mindful (like meditation, drawing, yoga)...

Something indulgent (a bath, a sweet treat, a pamper)...









# WORKING FROM HOME

## SUPPORTING STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

If working from home is a new change due to the Coronavirus pandemic, staff may need additional mental health support, particularly if they have existing mental health problems. Here are some key ways you can help to support your team's wellbeing.

#### CHECK IN REGULARLY

It can be isolating WFH, especially if you are in a job where you are used to lots of social interaction. Get some regular virtual catch ups in the diary, both 121's and group meetings. These can be both work related and social.

#### **POSITIVE WORK/LIFE BALANCE**

It's easier to work longer hours and take fewer breaks when WFH. Make sure you communicate a clear working hours plan with your team and encourage them to take breaks and get some fresh air.

#### EXPECTATIONS

You may find you cannot do certain tasks in the same way anymore. Make sure any changes in ways of working are communicated properly, and you set clear expectations of your team, encouraging feedback along the way.

#### WELLNESS ACTION PLANS

WAP's are an easy, practical way of helping you to support your own mental health at work and those you manage. You can find out more and download your own via MIND <u>here</u>

#### **SWOP THE PHONE FOR A VIDEO CALL**

A simple but effective one. When WFH the thing people miss most and affects our wellbeing is connection. Try to use different ways to connect and see each other virtually.

#### LEAD BY EXAMPLE!

Any new ways of working are best implemented from the top down. So, to encourage your team to look after their own wellbeing, you must look after your own! Share that you are going for walks, video call with colleagues and fill out a Wellness Action Plan.





# THE Science Behind Happiness

# **Happy Chemicals**

# **HAPPY CHEMICALS!**

We spend a lot of time discussing ways to be happier - maintain close friendships, look on the bright side, drink more water. But we don't often think about how we feel happiness. Did you know that the warmth you feel from a long hug is caused by an entirely different chemical sensation than the high you feel after a long run or bike ride?

So then, what's the real cause of our happiness? What makes us feel sensations of happiness, closeness, and joy? Brain chemicals! There are four primary chemicals that can drive the positive emotions you feel throughout the day: dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins (sometimes referred to as D.O.S.E.).

By understanding how these chemicals work on a basic level, we can better decide for ourselves whether the latest trends will be helping or hurting our happiness!

#### DOPAMINE The Reward Chemical

- Celebrate little wins
- Completing tasks
- Create a 'ta da' list
- Cooking and eating food
- Gratitude journaling
- Reflecting on achievements

### ΟΧΥΤΟΟΙΝ

#### The Love Chemical

- Petting an animal
- Playing with a baby
- Holding hands
- Hugging family
- Compliment others
- Cheer someone else up

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• Give to others

#### SERETONIN The Mood Stabiliser

- Mindfulness
- Running
- Sun exposure
- Walk in nature
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Relaxing bath

#### ENDORPHIN

#### **The Painkiller**

- Laughter
- Watch a comedy
- Exercise
- Laughter yoga
- Essential oils
- Massage
- Dark chocolate

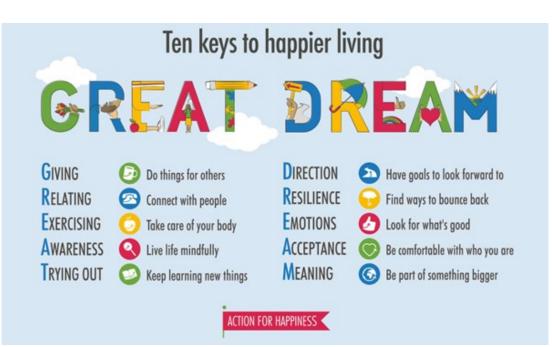




# **10 KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING**

The Ten Keys to Happier Living are based on a review of the latest research from psychology and related fields. Everyone's path to happiness is different, but the evidence suggests these Ten Keys consistently tend to have a positive impact on people's happiness and well-being.

The first five keys (GREAT) are about how we interact with the outside world in our daily activities. They are based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing developed by nef as part of the Foresight Project. The second five keys (DREAM) come from inside us and depend on our attitude to life.



Want to find out more about the 10 keys? See our blogs below on each key!

<u>Giving</u>	<b>Direction</b>
<u>Relating</u>	<u>Resilience</u>
<u>Exercising</u>	<u>Emotions</u>
Awareness	Acceptance
<u>Trying Out</u>	<u>Meaning</u>





## **Mental Health at Work - The Statistics**

#### Around 1 in 4 people

will experience a mental health problem this year.

### With our training you can...

#### Retain skills by reducing staff turnover

Staff turnover is estimated to cost the UK £8bn a year. Almost a third (31%) of staff said they would consider leaving their current role within the next 12 months if stress levels in their organisation did not improve. *(1)* 

#### **Reduce 'presenteeism'**

Presenteeism - people coming to work and underperforming due to ill health, accounts for two times more losses than absences (2)

#### Ensure compliance with legislation by understanding the law

If a mental health issue has adverse affects on someone's ability to perform day-to-day tasks, it can be considered a disability protected under The Equality Act 2010. Employers have a duty not to discriminate in these circumstances, and to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

#### Cut sickness absence

Mental ill-health is responsible for 72 million working days lost and costs an estimated £34.9 billion each year in the UK alone. (3) Note: Different studies will estimate the cost of mental ill health in different ways. Other reputable research estimates this cost to be as high as £74–£99 billion. (1)

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#### Ensure a healthier, happier workplace

35% of people think they would be less likely to get promoted if they had depression, resulting in a loss of diversity and skills throughout organisations. (1) We want both healthier and happier workplaces for everyone!

# Demonstrate a commitment to corporate social responsibility

According to data gathered by Business in the Community, only 11% of the Top 100 companies in Great Britain have disclosed information about their initiatives to support their employees' mental health in their annual reports. (4) We believe greater public transparency will create a sense of competition between employers, promoting success and driving and maintaining cultural change.

#### References

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- 1. Stevenson D, Farmer P. 'Thriving at work: The Independent Review of Mental Health and Employers' 2017
- 2. Work-related stress, depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain, 2020 by H.S.E
- 3. Centre for Mental Health. 'Mental health at work: The business costs ten years on'
- 4. Business in the Community. FTSE 100 public reporting: employee engagement and wellbeing







## Crisis contacts & support

# lt's good to talk

If you are concerned that you are developing a mental health problem you should seek the advice and support of your GP as a matter of priority. If you are in distress and need immediate help and are unable to see a GP, you should visit your local A&E.

#### Samaritans

**Telephone:** 116 123 (24 hours a day, free to call) **Website:** <u>https://www.samaritans.org</u>

Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide. You can phone, email, write a letter or in most cases talk to someone face to face.

#### Mind

**Telephone:** 0300 123 3393 (9am-6pm Monday to Friday) or text 86463

Website: <u>www.mind.org.uk/information-</u>

#### <u>support/helplines</u>

Mind provides confidential mental health information services.With support and understanding, Mind enables people to make informed choices. The Infoline gives information on types of mental health problems, where to get help, drug treatments, alternative therapies and advocacy. Mind works in partnership with around 140 local Minds providing local mental health services.

#### NHS

https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mentalhealth-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-

<u>emergency/</u>

Information page for dealing with a mental ill health crisis or emergency.

NHS 111 Helpline.

#### CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

**Telephone:** 0800 58 58 58 (open 5pm-midnight, 365 days a year)

CALM have a helpline for men in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support. CALM also offer a webchat service. <u>thecalmzone.net</u>

#### Papyrus

**HOPElineUK:** 0800 068 4141 (9am to midnight, every day of the year)

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**Website:** <u>www.papyrus-uk.org</u> Young suicide prevention society.

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#### Young Minds

**Telephone:** 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm)

**Website:** <u>https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/YoungMinds</u> Run a free, confidential parents helpline, which parents / carers can call if they are worried about how a child or young person is feeling or behaving. They also run a group called Parents Say, for parents whose children are accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

#### **Rethink Mental Illness**

**Telephone:** 0300 5000 927 (9.30am – 4pm Monday to Friday)

**Website:** <u>http://www.rethink.org/about-us/our-mental-health-advice</u>

Provides expert advice and information to people with mental health problems and those who care for them, as well as giving help to health professionals, employers and staff.

#### **Hub of Hope**

National mental health app database which brings together organisations and charities, large and small, from across the country who offer mental health advice and support, together in one place. hubofhope.co.uk

#### LGBT Switchboard

**Telephone:** 020 7837 7324 Provides information, support and referral services.

#### **Anxiety UK**

Telephone: 08444 775 774

Works to relieve and support those living with anxiety disorders by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services, including 1:1 therapy.

#### SANE

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**Telephone:** 0300 304 7000 (4:30pm-10:30pm) **Website:** www.sane.org.uk/what we do/support/helpline Saneline is a national mental health helpline providing information and support to people with mental health problems and those who support them.







# LET'S TALK D MENTAL HEALTH!

Book a free phone consultation with one of our mental health training team. Click <u>here</u>!

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