

Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Young People

Mental Health is about the way we cope with different things that are happening in our lives and how things can affect our emotions. Your mental health can be good and bad.

It can include feeling happy, sad, down, angry, tired, stressed, excited, anxious or scared.

There are many factors that can affect your Mental Health including things both inside and outside of our control;



- Not exercising enough
- Not having a healthy diet
- Being unwell / in pain
- Not getting enough sleep
- Someone close to us dying
- Feeling lonely or not having anyone to talk to

Tips for being Mentally Healthy

- Try to live a healthy lifestyle – exercising regularly, eating properly and getting a good night’s sleep can make you feel better about yourself, and help with Mental Health.
- Try to find activities that help you relax and make time for them.
- Finding ways to deal with stress, for example, using breathing exercises, can help with your moods.
- Spend time with friends and family doing things you enjoy. You might not feel like it sometimes, but it can help.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs - it may seem like they help in the short term, but they will only make things much worse.

Emotional Health covers problems such as;

Depression

It is normal to feel down and not enjoy things sometimes, but when these feelings are severe, long lasting, or keep coming back and begin to affect your day-to-day life, this may be a sign of depression. Depression is very much a real illness, and can affect your moods, energy, thoughts and behaviour. Depression can be treated. It can affect people of any age, and is common in teenagers and young adults.

Each year as many as 1 in 20 young people suffer with depression. Many things have been linked to depression. It can run in families, although many children whose parents have had depression do not go on to have problems themselves. It can also occur after a very traumatic event, such as the death of someone close to you, or in response to life stresses.

Young people with depression each experience the illness in their own way, but there are some common symptoms:

- Feeling unhappy or miserable most of the time.
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed.
- Being less able to concentrate and make decisions.
- Loss of confidence or self-esteem.
- Being too hard on yourself or feeling very guilty.
- Feeling low on energy and easily tired.
- Trouble sleeping, or sleeping more than usual.
- Feeling agitated/on edge or feeling slowed down.
- Changes to your appetite and weight.
- Thinking about death or any suicidal thoughts or behaviour.



Anxiety

Anxiety is a word we use to describe feelings of unease, worry and fear. It incorporates both the emotions and the physical sensations we might experience when we are worried or nervous about something. Although we usually find it unpleasant, anxiety is related to the 'fight or flight' response – our normal biological reaction to feeling threatened.

We all know what it's like to feel anxious from time to time. It's common to feel tense, nervous and perhaps fearful at the thought of a stressful event or decision you're facing – especially if it could have a big impact on your life.



Because anxiety is a normal human experience, it's sometimes hard to know when it's becoming a problem for you – but if your feelings of anxiety are very strong, or last for a long time, it can be overwhelming.

For example:

- You might find that you're worrying all the time, perhaps about things that are a regular part of everyday life, or about things that aren't likely to happen – or even worrying about worrying.
- You might regularly experience unpleasant physical and psychological effects of anxiety, and maybe panic attacks.
- Depending on the kind of problems you experience, you might be given a diagnosis of a specific anxiety disorder.

If anxiety is affecting your ability to live your life the way you'd like to, it's worth thinking about ways to help yourself, and what kind of treatments are available.

If you are suffering with depression or anxiety it can be difficult to talk about how you feel, but it is important to try and get help as soon as possible. Getting help is important whatever your age, and can have a positive impact on both yourself and those who care about you. The first step is to contact your GP or go to see a counsellor or nurse, who will be able to provide support and treatment locally. Many voluntary groups like Mind (mind.org.uk) also offer valuable advice.