

Mental Health: What's it all about


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What is Mental Health?

Mental Health is all about looking after your head – good mental health means having the right tools and supports to deal with life's challenges. This booklet is about looking after your mental health and the things that can help with that.



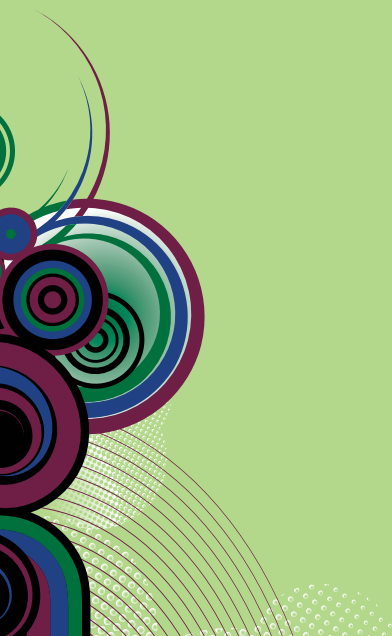
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- *Life can be tough and stressful. We all go through the ups and downs with family, friends, school, work, relationships or ourselves. Being able to recognise the tough times and having the support and know-how to get through them is what good mental health is all about.*
 - *When we have good mental health it makes it easier to get on with the people around us that we meet everyday like family, friends and teachers. It helps us to feel well and happy.*
 - *Good mental health means having the right tools and supports around to get you through the times when things become a bit more difficult to deal with.*

The Journey into Adulthood

Adolescence is an exciting and amazing time of rapid changes, growing up and figuring out 'who I really am'. It's a unique time... but it can also be a pretty challenging time.

In the haze and confusion of growing up, with changes going on in your mind, body, the world and people around you, its easy to lose your way, get a bit sidetracked and lose your purpose and sense of self. That's normal...





In this time you're becoming independent, you get to really forge your own identity and what you're all about. But there are going to be times where it feels like the rug has been pulled out from under you.

What's common for most young people is that unsettling feeling and voice in your head that says "everyone else is coping fine and I'm weird because this all feels like too much for me to handle." But you're not alone - everyone feels out of their depth at some point along this road.

Remember, at no other point in your life does so much change occur in such a short time.

Part of the experience of adolescence and young adulthood is learning how to take care of yourself and overcome the challenges. In facing difficulties you can learn:

- How to make mistakes and not beat yourself up about them.
- How to accept yourself warts and all.
- Where your strengths and talents lie.

Remember learning about how to stay mentally healthy doesn't mean that you'll never find things tough but it does mean that you'll develop the strength and resilience to come out the other side stronger and wiser.



Looking After Yourself

Good Mood Food EAT GOOD

You are what you eat, and a balanced diet helps you manage stress and stay in a good mood.

Steer clear of sugary and processed stuff.

- Sweets, biscuits, fast food, soft drinks. They might give your bloodstream a fast burst of energy, but it's only temporary – what goes up, comes down again, and this means your mood as well.

Eat more 'Whole Foods'

- Foods that release energy slowly are a lot better for you.

-Popcorn, nuts, jacket potatoes, home made wedges, wholegrain cereals, brown bread, wholegrain pasta and brown rice.



- B Vitamins are good for stress and mood - broccoli, cabbage, spinach and anything of the whole foods list.
- Vitamin C is another good mood booster, protecting your immune system. Eat oranges, kiwi fruit, berries, broccoli and peppers.
- Vitamin E is especially positive for women going through PMS - opt for blueberries, tomatoes, sunflower seeds and olive oil.
- Zinc helps lots of your functions and you need your share to help you feel well - whole foods, meat and milk.
- Magnesium helps your body produce the chemicals that make you feel good- nuts, whole foods and spinach, cabbage and broccoli.





Good Fats

- Omega-3, Omega-6 and other fatty acids are the building blocks for our bodies.

They break down bad fats, repair cells and enhance our brains and mood. Sardines, salmon, mackerel and oily fish are good for this, as well as nuts like walnuts, sesames, pumpkin seeds, cabbage and spinach. Linseed/flaxseed supplements are also great.

MOVE

Any activity that gets your heart pumping like dancing, running, football, walking or swimming will help your brain release endorphins, a good mood hormone. This can help you feel less anxious, calmer and may also give you a break from your problems.

EXPRESS

Apart from talking to others you can also express how you're feeling in other ways like writing, painting or drawing. This can help get your thoughts out of your head and onto paper and can make it easier to make sense of them.





CHILL

Find something that helps you relax: exercising, writing, reading, watching a film, listening to music or hanging out with your friends.

This will help your mind rest and help you to unwind. It's especially important to unwind before you go to bed as this can help you get a good night's sleep.


If you're in a situation that you find upsetting taking 3 slow deep breaths will help you lower your heart rate and feel calmer.

TALKING ABOUT IT

"Lonely, scared, isolated.
No-one knows what I'm going
through. No one understands.
I don't know. I don't understand.
How can anyone else?"

Sometimes it might happen that
you feel so bad you're afraid to let
someone else know what's going on
inside your head. You worry that they
will think you are "weird" and that
they may lose respect for you.





Sometimes it feels safer to hide your feelings and pretend everything is OK.

The problem with hiding your feelings is that they stay the same. Nothing changes. Your mood stays the same, and the longer you hide whatever is going on for you, the longer you feel stuck. It's never weak or vulnerable to admit your problems and talk it out with someone you trust.

So you're feeling a bit down?

Things on your mind that won't go away and won't make sense. That stuff sucks and it certainly can get your spirits down. But it's a part of life and help is always out there for you. This might be through family, friends or professionals like your GP, teacher or counsellor.

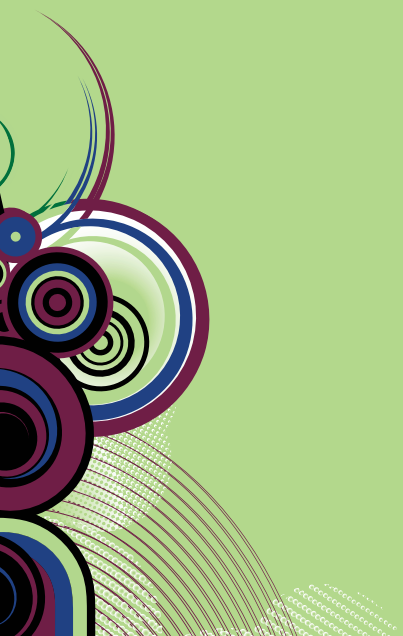
COMMON PROBLEMS and GETTING HELP

Did you know that 1 in 5 young people (aged 12-25) go through a tough time at any one moment? So if this is you, you're not alone.

Some young people might feel like they, "can't really ask your friends because it's sort of dodgy to start talking about things that are going on in your head. It's scary..."

"It can be difficult to find the right words to describe your problem, and this might make it more difficult to tell people how you're feeling..."






It might be stuff like:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Low confidence
- Addiction
- Eating disorders
- Bullying
- Family issues
- Self-Harm
- Stress

Learning how to deal with a difficult situation is a skill that you'll always have and will make you stronger and more able to deal with anything life throws at you in the future.

Finding support to help you do this is a scary but brave thing to do and remember there are lots of ways to find help or information - the net, helplines or talking to someone you trust - even if you're problems feel overwhelming - you're not alone in dealing with the pressures of life.





Know where to find help and info, how to get things off your chest and get your head back to a good place.

GETTING HELP

Helplines

- o The Samaritans – 1850 60 90 90
- o Teenline – 1800 833 634
- o Bodywhys – 1890 200 444
- o Childline – 1800 666 666
- o Drugs Helpline – 1800 459 459





The Web

- o www.headstrong.ie
- o www.spunout.ie
- o www.youngminds.co.uk
- o www.reachout.com
- o www.lowdown.co.nz
- o www.headspace.com.au



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