

MENTAL HEALTH

Factsheet

Mental health is a crucial aspect of life just as physical health is. Mental health can be described as the positive sense of wellbeing, and the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness.

Research shows one in four of us will experience some kind of mental health issue, so it is helpful to have a basic understanding of some of the issues, symptoms, impacts and the sources of support available.

Mental health issues

You should be aware that there are a number of diagnosable mental health conditions and people experience different symptoms that can vary in severity, intensity and form. The most commonly diagnosed are:

- Depression
- Bipolar disorders
- Anxiety disorders (including panic attacks)
- Schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorders, phobias
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm

Recovery is possible and with the right kind of help and support, many people are able to lead independent and fulfilling lives. However, sometimes relapse occurs and individuals may need ongoing support.

Influences on wellbeing

The following factors could affect someone's wellbeing:

- Work pressures (or unemployment)
- Financial worries (including debt)
- Homelessness / housing pressures
- Stress
- Relationship pressures (including bereavement and loss)
- Addiction (drugs and alcohol dependency)
- Abuse (physical or psychological)
- Physical illness or injury
- Loneliness and social isolation

Identifying early signs

When you are speaking to an individual or their dependants, the key thing to look and listen out for is a change in the person's typical behaviour. This can take many forms, so for example, they may have gone from being quite extroverted to becoming much more introverted. Other signs to look out for include tearfulness, headaches, loss of humour or appetite, or sudden changes in emotions or mood. Also, if someone appears distracted or disengaged when you are speaking to them, they might be struggling in their personal life.

Supporting someone

If problems are identified at an early stage more effective help and appropriate support can be possible. Sometimes just having someone who will listen is a comfort but always ensure that you actively listen, in order to manage a person's expectations around the support they might need. If someone you are speaking to becomes emotional, upset or you pick up on any warning signs then you should gently encourage the person to speak to their GP or seek further support from an appropriate organisation.

Things you should and should not say

Whatever you say to somebody you should always try to be positive and encourage the person to help themselves. Don't be judgmental or make assumptions about anybody. It could be beneficial for them to involve a family member or friend in conversations, should they wish to do so.

Questions you could ask to begin a conversation might include:

- How are you feeling at the moment?
- Is there someone you feel you can go to for support?
- How long have you felt like this – is it an ongoing issue?
- Is there anything we can do to help?

Above all, it is important to provide reassurance to anyone you are supporting and to encourage them to do the things which make them happiest. For example, this could mean encouraging them to revisit an existing hobby or explore taking up other hobbies.

What to do if someone becomes emotional or upset

Here are some useful points to help you should somebody you are visiting become emotional or upset:

- Try to be calm
- Be sensitive and sympathetic

- Reassure them that it is okay to be upset
- Be respectful
- Ask if there is anyone they would like you to contact for them
- Confirm that the discussion can continue at a pace that suits them

Find out more

The following list is a small selection of the wide range of organisations which publish information on Mental Health. *The MCF does not endorse or recommend any of the organisations listed.*

- **ASSIST trauma care**
Information and specialist help for people with PTSD and anyone supporting them.
www.assisttraumacare.org.uk
- **Combat Stress**
Provides UK wide support to veterans from every service and every conflict.
0800 1381619
www.combatstress.org.uk
- **Mental Health Foundation**
Helps people to thrive through understanding, protecting and sustaining their mental health.
020 7803 1100
www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- **Mental Health First Aid England**
For more information visit MHFA England;
<https://mhfaengland.org/>
- **MIND**
Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.
020 8519 2122
www.mind.org.uk
- **Rethink Mental Illness**
Helps millions of people affected by mental illness by challenging attitudes, changing lives.
0808 801 0525
www.rethink.org

- **Young Minds**

Leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, making sure they get the best possible mental health support.

0808 802 5544

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Other information

Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides grants and support for Freemasons and their family members. A wide range of help is available for daily living costs; health, care and wellbeing; and education-related costs for children and young people.

Call 0800 035 60 90 or visit www.mcf.org.uk

MCF Factsheets

You may also be interested in the following factsheets:

- **Addiction**
- **Dementia**
- **Trauma and PTSD**

Scan the QR code below or visit mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources



Whilst every care has been taken to verify accuracy, the information in this factsheet is for guidance only.

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