

A BRIEF GUIDE TO
**UNDERSTANDING
MENTAL HEALTH
PROBLEMS**



Mental health is just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it.

Mental health problems are common and most people know someone who has experienced them. It's likely that with the right combination of self-care, treatment and support, people will get better.

Common types of mental health problems

Anxiety: is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): is a type of complex anxiety disorder that has two main parts; obsessive thoughts and compulsive activities to reduce the anxiety caused by the obsession.

Phobias: are an extreme form of fear or anxiety triggered by a particular situation or object even when it's unlikely to be dangerous.

Depression: is a feeling of low mood that lasts for a long time and significantly affects your everyday life.

Bipolar disorder: is when you experience extreme mood swings, from feeling very high emotionally to feeling very low.


Eating problems: are not just about food. They can be about difficult and painful feelings which you may be finding it hard to face or resolve.

Personality disorders: are where your attitudes, beliefs and behaviours cause you longstanding problems in your life such as difficulties with how you think about yourself and others.

What causes mental health problems?

Mental health problems can be caused by a wide range or combination of factors, such as:

- Childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect
- Significant trauma as an adult, such as violence within relationships, abuse, a serious accident, or military combat
- Bereavement
- Social isolation or loneliness
- Unemployment or losing your job
- Drug or alcohol misuse



“For me, it started when my mother died. After struggling and burying things deeper, I finally cracked.”

Taking care of yourself

Self-care techniques and general lifestyle changes can help manage the symptoms of many mental health problems and prevent some from developing or getting worse. Remember that there is unlikely to be an instant solution. Recovering from a mental health problem will take time, energy and work.

Nourish your social life: Feeling connected to other people is important. It can help you to feel valued and confident about yourself.

Stay aware of your mental health: Spot your early warning signs and tell people what helps. Let others know how they can support you.

Make time for therapeutic activities: Try relaxation or breathing exercises, practising mindfulness or just simply being outside in nature.

Look after your physical health: Taking steps to look after your physical health like eating healthily, getting enough sleep and making time for personal care, can help you manage your mental health too.





Community support & treatment

Community support

There are many different local community support options and complementary and alternative services that can be helpful in easing common symptoms of mental health problems:

- Peer support services
- Nature and greenspaces
- Volunteering
- Yoga and meditation
- Mindfulness

You can contact SAMH's information service for help finding community support local to you.

What treatment can I get for mental health problems?

To diagnose a mental health problem, doctors will look at what you're experiencing, how long you've been experiencing these things, and the impact it's having on your life. To do this they may ask you questions about your mood, thoughts and behaviours.

The two most common forms of treatment offered are talking therapies and medication.



Talking therapies

Talking therapies provide a regular time and space for you to talk about your thoughts and experiences and to explore difficult feelings with a trained professional.


Medication

Depending on your diagnosis and your medical history, your doctor might prescribe you medication.

If your mental health problems are severe or longer lasting, or the treatment your doctor has offered you isn't working, they can refer you to specialist mental health services.



"Getting the diagnosis gave me something to work with and the words to describe what was happening."



How can you help?

It can be difficult to see someone who you care about becoming unwell, but you don't need to be an expert on mental health to offer support. Small, everyday actions can make a big difference.


Show your support: If you know someone has been unwell, don't be afraid to ask how they are. Spending time together lets them know you care, and can help you understand what they're going through.

Ask how you can help: Everyone will want support at different times and in different ways, so ask how you can help.


Be open-minded: Try to listen and avoid seeking solutions for the person. Someone experiencing a mental health problem often knows best what's helpful for them.

Don't just talk about mental health: Keep in mind that having a mental health problem is just one aspect of the person's life. Most people don't want to be defined by their mental health problem, so keep talking about the things you've always talked about together.

Show trust and respect: Trust and respect between you and the person are very important, helping to rebuild and maintain a sense of self-esteem, which can be damaged by a mental health problem.



"Sometimes all you need is a hug and for someone to tell you that you're going to get there."



Useful contacts

SAMH Information Service

0344 800 0550
info@samh.org.uk
www.samh.org.uk/information-service

*Got a question about mental health or wellbeing?
We can help. Contact us Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm.*

Breathing Space

0800 83 85 87
www.breathingspace.scot

Confidential out of office hours telephone line for people experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression.

 Follow us on Twitter:
@SAMHtweets

 Follow us on Facebook:
/SAMHmentalhealth

 Follow us on Instagram:
@samhscotland

SCAN FOR MORE RESOURCES



SAMH
Scottish Action for Mental Health

Scottish Charity no. SC008897
Scottish Action for Mental Health
Brunswick House, 51 Wilson Street, Glasgow, G11UZ

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