



Getting help when you're not okay

This factsheet offers practical advice and resources for what to do when you – or someone you know – is struggling with their mental health. It covers common symptoms and suggests coping strategies as well where to go for support.



It's okay not to be okay

Mental health is a balancing act for many of us. We can move from one end of the wellbeing spectrum to another, depending on what we have to deal with in life and the resources we have for coping with what comes our way.

It's really important to be kind to yourself if you experience a change in your mental health. Mental health conditions affect how we think about ourselves, meaning it can sometimes be tricky to recognise you're not feeling well and ask for help.

Recognise the signs of not being okay

Because there are different types of mental health problems, no two symptoms are going to be the same for everyone. However, there are some common signs that indicate your mental health might be suffering:

- Feeling negative about your life
- Feeling strong emotions more regularly, like anger or sadness
- Not sleeping well – difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping for long periods
- Feeling extra tired or fatigued
- Feeling agitated or experiencing repetitive thoughts
- Struggling to carry out your daily routine and tasks
- Using alcohol, smoking or drugs as coping mechanism
- Losing interest in social activities or hobbies

What to do when you're feeling bad

We all deal with feeling bad in our own way. Some of us are better at talking about it than others. The most important thing is to share with someone how you feel and seek extra support when you need it.

Where to get help

- Tell someone you trust how you're feeling and don't worry about being a 'burden' to them
- Visit to your GP and ask for their help
- Look for help online – try the NHS's Every Mind Matters website or mental health charity MIND
- Call The Samaritans on 116 123. They will listen to your problems confidentially and without judgement, and are free to talk to 24/7, 365 days a year

If you are experiencing thoughts about self-harm or suicide, tell someone straight away. You can call 111 – or 999 in an emergency.

Longer-term, you can refer yourself to non-urgent psychological services known as IAPT (improving access to psychological therapies). These are evidence-based therapies such as CBT that can help treat mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Find your coping strategy

It's a good idea to figure out what coping strategies could help to get you through tough periods in your life.

Remember that you are not alone

Millions of people struggle with their mental health. There is always someone – whether a family member, friend, volunteer or professional – who will listen to your feelings.

Know what your triggers are

Spend time reflecting on what sets off any episodes of not feeling okay. It could be an event, a person, a feeling, or a behaviour. While we can't completely avoid all of these triggers, we can minimise our exposure to them or develop coping strategies to help us anticipate and manage them.

Find your mindfulness

Whether you enjoy yoga or meditation, running or singing in a choir – there's an activity out there that will lift your mood and take you away from your troubles, even just for a short while.

Accept that changes in mood are normal

Gently accept the fact that your mental health fluctuates. Taking this approach could make you more tolerant of, or at least less surprised about, down periods when they do arrive.



Struggling to cope with everyday life doesn't look or feel the same in everyone - The Samaritans