



August 2018

# HLP Newsletter

## Mental Health

Hello!

Welcome back to our latest **Healthy Living Pharmacy** newsletter. Mental Health is becoming a pressing priority and services are struggling to cope with the burden. Here is a small snapshot of the key information to help raise awareness of this important issue that affects us all.

### Reducing the Stigma

20% of women and 13% of men have a common mental health problem, most of these are anxiety and depressive disorders.

When referring to our mental health, its useful to think of it as we would physical health. Being mentally healthy looks different for everyone, as with physical health. In the same way as when we have a physical illness, mental health illnesses can be treated, and we are not to blame for becoming ill. Once diagnosed and with appropriate support, we are more likely to recover back to full health.



When symptoms of mental illness begin to show, it is recommended that we seek help. Early signs are when in our daily lives, the ability to function normally and being able to build and maintain relationships is affected. Symptoms range

in frequency, severity and form and can be felt without having a specific trigger or diagnosis.

There are many different mental health illnesses, and lots of ways to treat them. The earlier we recognise mental ill-health, the more likely we can recover full health. It's therefore vital to know when someone needs help, and especially to know when we may need to access help ourselves.

People tend to be reluctant to talk to family and friends about their mental health, and professional help is accessed even later after symptoms start. Shame and concern about what others might think are often the main reasons people keep their mental illness symptoms to themselves.

GP's, nurses and psychologists may not always be available at time of crisis, which is why it is important to offer some support in pharmacy and increase awareness of where to signpost to for those in need.

### Offering Support

Many different reasons may bring on mental health problems. Influences include pressure at work, at home or within relationships,



drugs and alcohol, being a carer, financial worries and a whole host of other factors. People have different vulnerabilities and ways of coping, and therefore someone may be experiencing many potential issues but have a positive mental health, or someone may not seem to have many factors, but be mentally unhealthy. We're all different.

When starting a conversation about mental health, whether it be with a friend or with a stranger, you may find that they shut down and be closed about the topic. Let them know that you or someone else will be around to support them for a private chat if and when they need it.

It is important to encourage people to talk and listen in a non-judgmental way, this alone can be highly supportive.

Using silence in conversation can enforce comfort and support even more than asking lots of questions. Use open discovery questions beginning with **WHAT** or **HOW** to understand more about their situation, thoughts and feeling so that you can help them. This approach gives them the opportunity to look at their own needs and empowers them to discuss their own solutions or ask for help if they don't know any.

Being positive and reassuring can make the person feel comfortable. Encourage people to use self-help techniques whilst they seek help from other places. Social stigma is associated with mental health, and therefore never judging, labelling or stereotyping will help to break this.

The best way to prepare to look after others is to first take care of yourself. ‘You can’t pour from an empty cup’. These self-care tips are also useful to suggest to others who need them.

- Think about and schedule pleasurable activities which are social, physically active and give you a sense of achievement. For example, going for a walk or to an exercise class with a friend.
- Find a good stress reliever. For some people journaling (writing down how you feel and what you’ve done) at the end of the day is best, for others walking their dog in nature can be great. Cooking, listening to music and even cleaning can be great stress relievers depending on the person. It’s good to find which is right for you.
- Know when you should tell others that you’re not 100%. It’s okay to say you’re not okay.
- Enjoy and make plans for your free time. See family, friends or even just put aside a good book for when you have a few days off.
- Learn how to rate from 0-10 how you’re feeling. This will put things into perspective. Find what your best days and moods (10) look like compared to your worse (0). Then, when feeling stressed, decide where you sit on the scale and where you have to be on the scale for you to talk to someone.
- To change a bad mood quickly, we like to find something to make us smile or laugh. Taking 5 minutes to appreciate something beautiful (for example, a stunning view, gorgeous flowers), something funny (ask a friend to tell you the cheesiest joke you can think of or watch a comedy you really enjoy) or something delicious (for example, a perfect cup of tea with the best biscuits).
- The five steps to wellbeing (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>) is an evidence-based approach and can help you help others:
  - Connect
  - Be active
  - Keep learning
  - Give to others
  - Be mindful



**Useful websites:**  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

**Health Champions Facebook page:**  
 Where we share campaign ideas and stories. Please sign up so you can be included:  
[www.facebook.com/hlpcommunity](https://www.facebook.com/hlpcommunity)