

# The Mental Health Toolkit for Young People

kindred

This toolkit is here to help you  
navigate mental health resources.

But there's nothing textbook about  
it. It's practical, to-the-point and  
exceptionally human.

# Mental health is about wellbeing.

Just like being physically healthy, you can be mentally healthy.

## **MENTAL HEALTH..**

...is our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It influences how we feel, think and act.

### **BEING MENTALLY HEALTHY LOOKS LIKE:**

- fulfilling your full potential
- being able to cope with stressful situations
- being able to work productively
- connecting and contributing to your community

## **MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS..**

...are disorders that affect how you feel, act and behave. This can happen when you have poor mental health.

E.g., it's natural to feel anxious from time to time but an anxiety disorder is when your anxiety takes over and controls your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

So mental health issues can become disorders when they start to interfere with your ability to live everyday life.

# What are Mental Health Support Services?

Support services exist to help you with mental health problems of any shape or size.

You don't have to be suffering with a mental disorder to use these services! You can also seek support if you want to get skills to manage your wellbeing or learn more about yourself.



## IMMEDIATE DANGER





You can call 999 if you think you or your friend are in immediate danger.

This happens often, so the police know what to do :)



You don't need to wait for things to be bad to get help!

## TYPES OF SERVICES

SERVICE	WHAT ARE THEY FOR?
 Support lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To get immediate support for thoughts, feelings or problems you're having or ask about helping a friend or family member.</li></ul>
 Online chat support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To get immediate support for thoughts, feelings or problems you're having.</li></ul>
 Online forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To share any problems you're struggling with, like for example, issues at home or work.</li></ul>
 Counsellors & Psychologists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To talk to a professional about any mental health issues or disorders you're struggling with.</li></ul>

# Understanding Your Emotions

A good first step to understanding your mental health is to ask yourself *how am I feeling?*



**Loved:** appreciated and cared for



**Proud:** pleased with an achievement



**Happy:** joy or feelings of contentment



**Hopeful:** feeling good about the future



**Relieved:** comforted or reassured



**Embarrassed:** ashamed or shy



**Scared:** anxious or afraid



**Angry:** frustrated and cross



**Hatred:** intense dislike



**Disappointed:** let down or defeated



**Sad:** down or heartbroken

**Try me!** *I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ happens. I need \_\_\_\_\_.*

# Anxiety

makes you feel excessively worried for long amounts of time. These feelings may change how you behave or stop you from living normally.

Anxiety looks different for everyone. It can come out of the blue or as a response to stressful situations.

## Signs

- Persistent feelings of worry or nervousness
- Feeling a sense of panic or doom about the future
- Feeling agitated or on edge
- Trouble sleeping
- Heart racing

## What can I do?

- **Move:** try to do some form of exercise, even if it's just a short walk.
- **Breathe:** focus on counting your breathing.
- **Grounding:** try to focus on things around you that you can see, touch, hear, smell and taste.
- **Talk:** find someone close to you to talk to about your feelings.
- **Get professional help:** professionals use therapy to help you manage your thoughts and feelings .

## Who experiences it?

Anxiety is the most common disorder experienced by young people. Most of us struggle with anxious thoughts and feelings. Luckily, there are lots of things you can do to overcome the symptoms.

# Jeanti's story



I was a really happy kid. Blessed. Life was easy. But in Year 11, anxiety hit like someone flicked a switch.

One day I was standing at lunch, eating grapes and chatting to friends when all of a sudden I was hit by the most intense feelings of nervousness I had ever experienced. It took over my whole body.

I first heard the word “anxiety” when talking to a teacher. We had already been talking about things like the pressure I was putting on myself at school and I don't think she was surprised when I told her how I was feeling. With her support I told my parents. I basically just sat them down after dinner and told them. My parents and teachers helped me talk to my GP, who referred me to a private psychologist. At the time everything was so new, and I didn't really know anything about mental health.

The biggest step that helped me was talking. I was talking to my teachers, my family and friends as well as professionals.



While I no longer see a psychologist on a regular basis I have to see a psychiatrist once a month for my medications. Having the pre-scheduled appointments is good because I will never have to make the call of “should I get help now or just wait it out?”

To stay mentally healthy I monitor my stress levels carefully. If they seem to be going too far in the wrong direction I know I should reach out. I also spend time just chatting to unload. Sometimes you don't realise how heavy something is until you let it go, so having a constant open dialogue is really important.

*Read Jeanti's full story @ [kindredminds.org](https://www.kindredminds.org)*

# Depression

affects how you feel, often causing sadness and a sense of feeling low.

It can occur out of the blue or in response to a distressing situation.

## Signs

- Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue

## Who experiences it?

Around 1 in 5 people will experience depression at some point in their lifetime. The good news is that there are lots of treatments to help people recover from the symptoms.

## What can I do?

- **Move:** try to do some form of exercise, even if it's just a short walk.
- **Connect:** try to talk to a friend or family member daily.
- **Talk:** find someone close to you to talk to about your feelings.
- **Build happy habits:** try to do one small thing you enjoy every day, even if it doesn't feel good.
- **Get professional help:** professionals use therapy to help you manage your thoughts and feelings .



# Emily's story



Growing up, everyone had their own idea of who I should be.

There were so many different expectations - being smart enough, skinny enough, pretty enough, fast enough, good enough. I couldn't meet them all. I felt like I was letting everyone down.

People used to say I was like a puppy - always excited and curious about the world. There wasn't really a certain point where everything changed - it was gradual and I hardly noticed anything happening. I felt like there was this emptiness inside of me. It was like I had a sink that had lost its plug. In my darkest times, I felt completely trapped in my own mind and body. Every task seems impossible and pointless. I couldn't see a reason to do anything, let alone get out of bed. But on the outside it was hard for others to notice that anything had changed. I got so good at hiding behind a mask.

I had a breakdown at school and was sent to the school counsellor. It was unusual for me to be emotional in public and so my friends and teachers knew something was wrong. The counsellor talked to me for a while before sending me to a clinical psychologist.



I was really anxious about speaking about my experiences for the first time because it was new and I didn't know how to talk about them. I didn't use terms like "mental health" or "depression", but instead I remember I said I felt "heavy", "unmotivated", and "tired all the time". It was really helpful to speak with someone who was able to help me detangle my thoughts. For me, everything felt really overwhelming and I couldn't understand what was happening. It helped a lot to hear from someone who was able to show me that there was hope and we could explore ways forward together. I didn't have to be alone anymore.

I think the biggest thing for me is to acknowledge that recovery is not linear. It's a bumpy road and there will always be ups and downs. I try to be kind to myself every day and be the person that I needed when I was younger.

*Read Emily's full story @ [kindredminds.org](https://www.kindredminds.org)*

# Stress & Burnout

stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with pressures.

Long term, ongoing stress can lead to burnout: a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion.



## Signs

- Feeling worried, nervous or restless
- Feeling irritable and exhausted
- Avoiding work
- Trouble sleeping
- No longer enjoying hobbies

## Who experiences it?

The most common times for young people to experience stress and burnout are at the end of high school or during uni exams. However, there are lots of ways you can look after yourself to reduce stress.

## What can I do?

- **Disconnect:** try to spend at least 1 hour a day without screens.
- **Lifestyle changes:** take breaks from work and try different activities like walking, cooking, socialising with friends.
- **Sleep:** focus on resting and try to get 8 hours sleep every night.
- **Talk:** find someone close to you to talk to about your feelings.
- **Get professional help:** professionals use therapy to help you manage your thoughts and feelings.

# Dan's story



I've always been pretty positive... but after losing my dad to suicide, I struggled with the pressure of a new job.



Throughout school and uni, I was a pretty positive person; friends, sport & music were all enriching parts of my life. After uni, I started a new role in big tech. It came with lots of responsibility and I felt huge pressure and fear that I was underperforming early on. My sleep started to worsen and I'd wake up feeling stressed. I felt less joy and excitement from things that once gave me pleasure. I would count down the hours and minutes before I had to go to a meeting.

I was at a medical appointment unrelated to mental health, when a staff member expressed concern about my wellbeing. At the time I was feeling a bit off, but hadn't self-identified with any mental health conditions. That got me thinking, but it still took me a few months as stronger thoughts emerged around 'I'm feeling down, stressed, anxious' to finally talking to a psychologist. In 2021, I was diagnosed with depression, anxiety and burnout.

There were lots of factors that contributed, among them:

the loss of my dad who suffered from addiction and mental health conditions.

I first found help through my work who helped me access counselling. These two services made me realise I needed something more long-term support and I found a psychologist to help with that.

I kept seeing a psych for several months after I recovered, and it's something I want to re-engage as a good safety net. I run regularly to stay healthy, and I set up recurring catchups with friends who energise me. I talk to family and friends openly and early when I'm struggling. I also set an evening alarm that tells me to stop working and unwind.

But I'm still working it out; it's not a perfect system.

*Read Dan's full story @[kindredminds.org](https://www.kindredminds.org)*

# Coping During Uncertain Times

Human beings love stability. Meaning, it's normal to feel more anxiety or stress during times of uncertainty.

eg. Lockdown, natural disasters or civil unrest

## What happens?

These events can have huge effects on our emotions and we often need to take extra steps to look after our mental health.

## What can I do?

- Be kind to yourself
- Focus on the things you have overcome - remind yourself that you are resilient
- Limit exposure to the news
- Make a list of things you are grateful for
- Think about the people you love and try to spend time with them
- Make a bucket list of things you want to do in the future
- Reach out to a mental health support service



# Support lines

## WHAT ARE THEY

Services you can call to get immediate support from trained support workers.

## HOW TO USE

All you need to do is call the number and someone will be there to talk to you! Some lines are always available (24/7).

Young People	The Mix: 0808 808 4994 Youngminds: <b>Text</b> "YM" to 85258	24/7
Under 16	Childline: 0800 1111	
Suicide	Helpline: 0800 689 5652 CALM: 0800 58 58 58	24/7
Problems with Alcohol and Drugs	Alcoholics Anonymous: 0800 9177 650 FRANK: 0300 123 6600	
Eating Disorders	England: 0808 801 0677 Wales: 0808 801 0433 Scotland: 0808 801 0432 Northern Ireland: 0808 801 0434	
Anxiety, Depression and Personal Struggles	Hopeline: 0800 068 4141 SANEline: 0300 304 7000 Samaritens: 116 123	24/7
Sexual Assault	0808 802 9999	24/7
LGBTQIA+	Switchboard: 0300 330 0630	

# Online Support

## WHAT ARE THEY

Online services where you can chat 1 to 1 with a support worker or find specialised support.

## HOW TO USE

You open each chat window to talk to someone. There can be a little wait but they'll always be someone after a little while.

## WHERE CAN YOU GO

Any mental health issues

 [Mental Health Matters](#)

Under 25

 [The Mix](#)

Under 16

 [Childline](#)

Eating Disorders

 [Beat Eating Disorders](#)

Email or Text Support Services

 [Sane Support](#)



### HOT TIP

We know you're not going to type in long URLs. So:

- 1) Click on the links
- 2) Type the forum name into Google :)

# Online Forums

## WHAT ARE THEY





Online community spaces where you can:

- Ask for advice
- Read what others post
- Share your own story

## HOW TO USE

You can visit the forums at any time (day or night).

## WHERE CAN YOU GO

Any mental health issues	<a href="#"> <u>Mind - Side by Side Community</u></a> <a href="#"> <u>Mental Health Forums</u></a>
Young People	<a href="#"> <u>Young Minds Blog</u></a>
Discussing mental illness	<a href="#"> <u>SANE Forums</u></a>

# Apps

All these apps are free and don't require a suscription!

Meditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insight timer</li><li>• Aura</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smiling mind</li></ul>
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep++</li><li>• PrimeNap</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calm</li></ul>
Mental Health Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evergreen Life</li><li>• 7Cups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moodpath</li></ul>



# Counsellors & Psychologists

## WHAT ARE THEY

**Counsellors:** Support workers who can help you with personal problems or mental health issues.

**Psychologists:** Accredited mental health professionals who provide specialised mental health care.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

There are lots of different counsellors & psychologists and they usually specialise in different areas of mental health. It can take a bit of time to find the right professional. A lot of psychologists also have long wait times at the moment. In the meantime you could try [alternative options to therapy](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Find a **counsellor** online:

- [Counsellor Directory](#)
- [BACP Tool](#)

Find a **psychologist** online:

- [Find My Psychologist Tool](#)
- [BPS Tool](#)

You can use these tools to search by speciality and location and find a psychologist or professional that is the right fit.

## Other Support Resources

- [NHS Helpline: 111](#)
- [Mind Crisis Centres](#)
- Helplines, including the [NHS Urgent Care Line](#)
- [Anxiety UK](#)
- [Samaritans Branch](#)

*If you or someone you know is in immediate danger dial 999*







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