What this guide is about

Feeling worried, low or out of sorts – or just struggling to work up the energy to do things you used to enjoy – isn't just part and parcel of getting older. It could be an important sign that you're not feeling as well as you could be.

There are lots of reasons why your moods might change. But it's important to know that if you've not been feeling yourself lately, there's support available.

This guide looks at talking about mental health, the common symptoms of mental health problems, and what support is available.

If you're feeling low or out of sorts, don't keep it to yourself. Ask your doctor or nurse about how they could help you get back on track.

Understandably, many people find it daunting or not in their nature to talk about their feelings with others. But ignoring your low mood doesn't make it go away – it's likely to only make it worse in the long term. Maybe now is the time to take the first step to helping yourself feel better.

Good to know

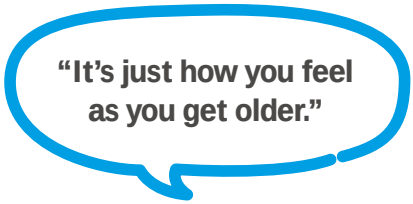
There are different organisations you can go to for support with your mental health. Here are just a few helpful phone numbers, but theke in t03 (k)22.96 0.622 0.892239.6 (n)2.8 (e n)5.308Utselpfu12.8

Rethinking mental health

We've all heard how important it is to look after our physical health – to stay active and eat well. But what about our mental health? Looking after our mental health is just as important but can often be sidelined.

We can all be guilty of putting our feelings to one side and thinking we'll 'deal with it later'. But we shouldn't. Addressing our thoughts and feelings is often the best thing we can do to help ourselves feel better.

Do any of these sound familiar?



"I don't want to make a fuss.""ÐD7n-GB008 TkTm["}yc5 (I

It's OK to speak to your doctor if you're worried about your mental health. Times have changed and there's now a focus on making sure your mind is as healthy as your body. Your doctor will have lots of experience in supporting people with their mental health and won't judge you for talking about it.

How you might be feeling

It can be hard to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems, so they can often be overlooked or mistaken for physical health conditions – or just part of getting older. But there are lots of reasons why you may be feeling this way.

Spotting the signs and symptoms of mental health problems

Recognising the symptoms of a mental health problem is the first step in helping yourself to start to feel better.

If you're experiencing some of the feelinga939alth conditions – bP 8 (t)10.8 (a

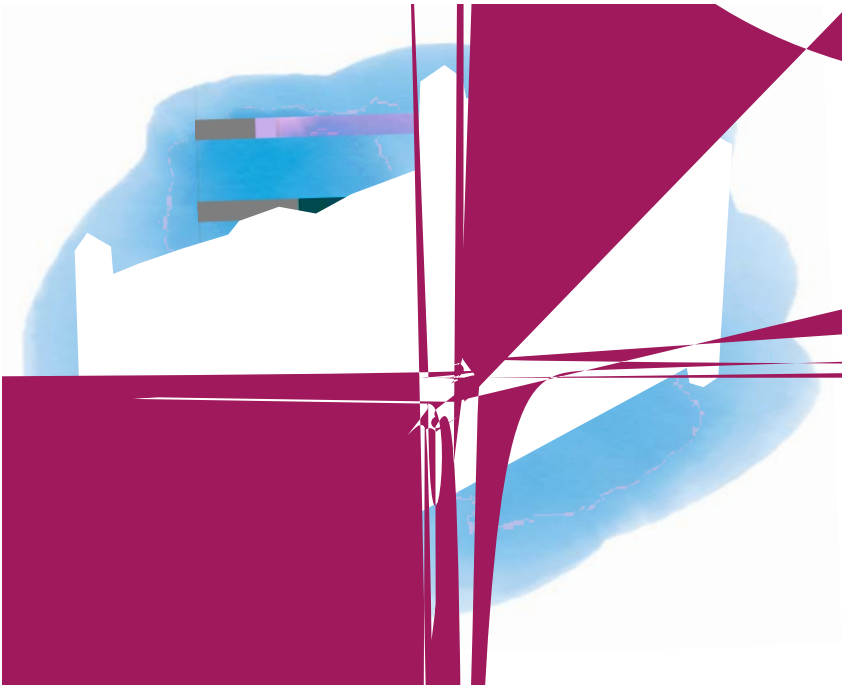
Changes in what you do:

- Worrying a lot and being unable to relax.
- Avoiding social activities.
- Having difficulty speaking and or thinking clearly or making decisions.
- Eating or sleeping more or less than usual.
- Not taking as much care of your appearance.
- Drinking more alcohol than usual.

Changes within your body:

- Physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause.
- Moving very slowly, or being restless and agitated.
- Getting pins and needles a lot.
- Breathing faster than usual.
- Feeling lightheaded, dizzy or nauseous.
- Having a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat.
- Sweating or experiencing hot flushes.
- Having panic attacks (sudden, intense bouts of anxiety or fear).

Feeling worried



Feeling unmotivated

We've all felt unmotivated before – whether you can't face doing chores around your home or going out and socialising. But feeling unmotivated, low in energy and losing interest in activities you used to enjoy for long periods of time can be a sign that something else is going on. It's always best to speak to your doctor or nurse if you've noticed you've been feeling like this for a while.

Feeling lonely

Being a carer

Looking after your partner, a relative or a friend is rewarding, but it can also be exhausting and even frustrating. It's a big

Relationship or family problems

Worrying about those we care about most can really affect how we feel. They may be experiencing their own prcilimrt (r, r)-28.8]TJE

After Joe retired, he found himself missing

Getting help

Once the doctor has looked at what could be causing your feelings, they'll talk to you about different treatment options. These will depend on the feelings you've been having, how long they've been going on, whether you've had treatment before and if so, how helpful it was. Think about what you might find most helpful and discuss the pros and cons of your treatment options with your doctor.

Talking treatments

'Talking therapies' can be very helpful for people who are feeling low, anxious or out of sorts. They involve talking to someone who is trained to help you manage your thoughts and feelings and the effect they have on your mood and behaviour. They are available for free on the NHS and may be offered in one-to-one sessions or in a group.

Talking therapies are proven to work. You can refer yourself to see someone locally, or your doctor or nurse can do it for you if you prefer.

The most common talking therapies are Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and counselling.

Good to know

Talking therapies are often referred to as improving access to psychological therapies (IAPTs). Your doctor may refer you, or you can refer yourself. You can find out what might be available locally by searching for 'IAPT' on the NHS website.

‘Wait and see’ or ‘watchful waiting’

Applied relaxation

If you're experiencing anxiety, you may be offered applied relaxation. This focuses on relaxing your muscles and teaches you to use techniques to help you cope in situations where you feel anxious. It usually consists of weekly hour-long sessions, delivered by trained practitioners over 12-15 weeks.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique that can help you focus more on the present moment by becoming more aware of the sights, sounds and feelings that you're experiencing. It can help you cope with difficult thoughts or feelings and is proven to be beneficial for people who are living with mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression. Mindfulness exercises can be done at home or when you're out and about.

St John's Wort

St John's Wort is a herbal remedy for depression that is available from health shops and pharmacies. There is some evidence that it can be an effective remedy, but it's not recommended by doctors or the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for three reasons:

- There is a variation in the amount of active ingredients within

3. Eat well and drink sensibly

What we eat and drink affects how we feel. Try not to fill up on the wrong things, but also don't ignore any signs you may not be eating enough, such as losing weight unexpectedly. Our guide **Healthy living** has more information about having a healthy diet and drinking sensibly.

4. Keep active

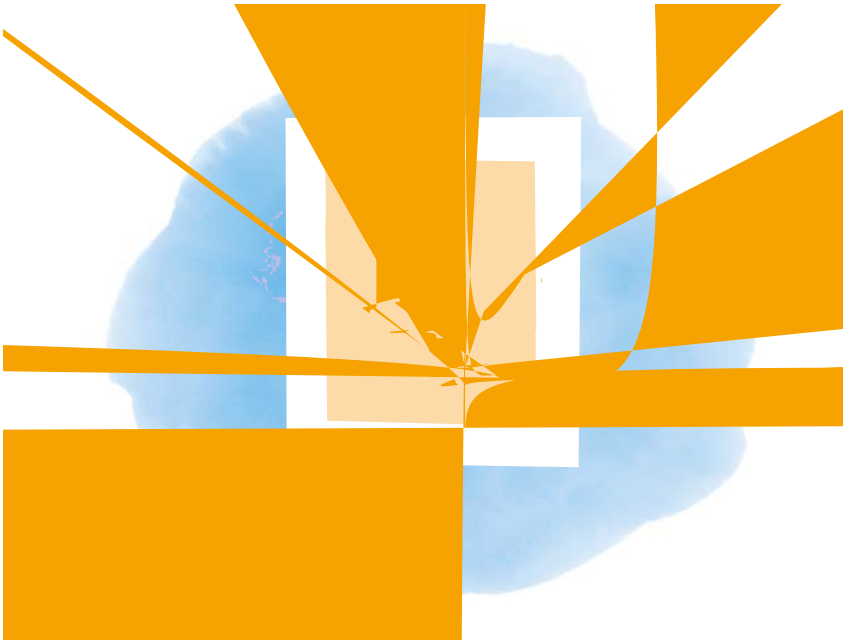
As well as keeping you healthy, exercise is a great way to improve your mood, as it increases the production of endorphins – brain chemicals that make you feel happy. Keeping active can also be a good way to clear your mind and relax. It's never too late to be active and there are lots of simple ways to start moving more – even doing things like gardening or going for a walk can improve your mood.

5. Create structure to your day and set yourself goals

Most of us look forward to retirement and having time to ourselves, but when it comes it can be hard to adjust to the loss of structure in our day, and the purpose that working life gave us. Setting goals and making plans gives our lives meaning and purpose. Start small and make sure you're realistic – for example, you may set yourself a goal to go for a 10 minute walk every day. You may also choose to do some volunteering to help give yourself routine and structure.

"My husband has depression. I make sure we do something out and about at least once a week."

Pat, 73



If you're worried about someone

We all have a part to play in talking about mental health. If you're worried that a friend, partner or relative may need support with their mental wellbeing, there are various ways you can help.

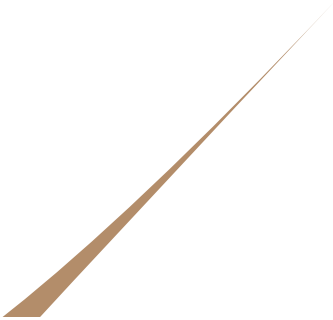
The best thing you can do is support them, listen to them, remind them they're not to blame for the way they're feeling, and reassure them that things will get better with time and help.

Talking to someone about their mental health might be helpful to getting them back on track. Asking questions like "How are you feeling in yourself?" can give somebody the opportunity to talk.

Be there. Simply being there for the person you are concerned about can let them know that someone cares. Don't be afraid to ask them how they're feeling and if there's anything you can do to help. Having someone who is willing to listen without judgement could be a great comfort.

Encourage them to get help. Reassure your friend or relative that it's possible to feel better with the right help. If they're reluctant to see a doctor about their feelings, suggest they go for a physical check-up instead. The doctor should spot underlying problems. It may be possible for you to go along for moral support.

Support their treatment. It can take several weeks to feel the benefits of treatment, so encourage your friend or relative to take any medication and attend appointments.



Encourage them to be healthy and active. Eating well and exercising can help improve mental wellbeing. Suggest things you've always liked to do together, like going for a walk or a trip to a museum. Or perhaps you could arrange to have dinner with them, or go out for lunch occasionally.

Offer practical help. Your loved one may be low on energy and motivation, so practical assistance like helping with household chores, picking up prescriptions and organising appointments could be a big help. Try to do things together where possible – being included will be good for their self-esteem.

Be patient. When people are living with loh o(65()-7.5 (t (s63.1/)-3.1 0 11 - 0

Alzheimer's Society

Offers advice, information and support in England and Wales to people with dementia, their families and carers through its

C.A.L.L. Helpline – Community Advice and Listening Line

Offers a confidential support and listening service on mental health and related matters in Wales.
Tel: **0800 132 737 (or text 'help' to 81066)**
www.callhelpline.org.uk

Carers UK

Provides advice, information and support for carers. Also offers an online community that connects carers to people who understand what they're going through.
Tel: **020 7378 4999** (England)
Tel: **029 2081 1370** (Wales)
Tel: **02890 439 843** (Northern Ireland)
www.carersuk.org

Cruse

Has a dedicated helpline to support people who have been bereaved, and offers free bereavement counselling.
Helpline: **0808 808 1677**
www.cruse.org.uk

Dementia UK

Provides information for those affected by dementia, their family, friends and carers. Has a helpline staffed by Admiral Nurses who can offer advice and support.
Admiral Nurse Helpline: **0800 888 6678**
www.dementiauk.org

Depression UK

National self-help organisation that helps people cope with their depression.
Email: **info@depressionuk.2 (n)-2 dTm[uk.2 (n)eaBww2.1 (.Tm[-denionukd-0.7**

Independent Age

Provides advice and support for older people, their families and carers.

Tel: **0800 319 6789**

www.independentage.org

LGBT+ Cymru Helpline & CmdeeipliGBGg

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Provides details of local volunteer centres and opportunities across England.
Tel: **020 7520 2552**
www.ncvo.org.uk

In Wales, contact **Volunteering Wales**
www.volunteering-wales.net

In Northern Ireland, contact **Volunteering Now**
www.volunteernow.co.uk

NHS

Find out about local NHS services in England and get information on mental wellbeing.
www.nhs.uk

The NHS website Every Mind Matters has a mind plan, and gives advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.
www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters

In Wales, contact **NHS 111 Wales**
Tel: **111** (or in certain areas where this number doesn't operate yet, call **0845 46 47**)
www.111.wales.nhs.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **NI Direct**
www.nidirect.gov.uk

Online Centres Network

Provides access to computers and the internet, and helps people gain basic digital skills. Use the 'find a centre' facility to locate your nearest Online Centre.
Tel: **0114 349 1666**
www.onlinecentresnetwork.org

Re-engage

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

† The Age UK network includes the charity, its trading companies and national partners (Cymru, Scotland and NI). We also work closely with local Age UKs. Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Tavis House, 1–6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA.

Your details

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