

AWARE

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.**

LET'S TALK ABOUT

**YOUNG PEOPLE
HELPING YOU
WITH YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH**

When you hear the words 'mental health' - what do you think of?

Maybe the words 'crazy' or 'nuts' come to mind. There are probably a lot of people who think the same.

But the word 'mental' simply means to do with your mind.



What is Mental Health?

It's about your thoughts, feelings, and how you deal with the ups and downs of life. Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean you're happy all the time - that's impossible!

It's completely normal to feel good when you're having fun with friends, and just as normal to feel low after an argument or a stressful day. Your mood will naturally go up and down depending on what's happening in your life.

Good mental health means you can enjoy the good times, cope with harder times and are able to bounce back afterwards.



Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

We all deal with things in our own way. Something that makes one person feel really stressed or anxious might not bother someone else at all - and that's totally normal!

It's not just what happens that affects how we feel, but how we think about it. The way you think about a situation can change how you feel in your mind and your body, and even how you act.

If you often think about things in a negative or unhelpful way, it can create a bit of a trap - like a loop that makes you feel worse and worse. This is sometimes called a "vicious circle."



Signs It May Be More Than a Bad Mood

If you're feeling very low it may be depression - if the sadness or low mood:

 Lasts a long time (a few weeks or more)

 Are more than you can cope with

 Affects your daily life and relationships

Mental ill-health can affect anyone at any time.

In Northern Ireland, mental health problems in children and young people are common, with a recent survey finding that 1 in 8 children and young people here experience common mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.

(Youth Wellbeing Prevalence Survey 2020)



DEPRESSION

is

more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.

Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days. (NHS)



Why Do We Get Depression?



1. Heredity

Having a parent or close relative who has had depression may increase your risk.



2. Environment

Factors like poor housing, money worries, stress, relationship problems, physical illness, or loneliness.



3. Life Events & Experiences

Such as loss, abuse, bullying, family breakdown etc.



4. Personality

If you have a more sensitive personality or perfectionist tendencies, you are more vulnerable to depression.

How Do I Know if I Have Depression?

Depression affects your thoughts, feelings, your body (physical symptoms) and your behaviour:

You might THINK:

- "I'm useless"
- "Nothing ever goes right"

You might FEEL:

- Unhappy
- Worried
- Guilty
- Angry

PHYSICALLY you might FEEL:

- Aches & pains
- Tired
- Trouble sleeping
- Lose/gain weight

BEHAVIOURS may include:

- Crying
- Staying in or avoiding things
- Hurting yourself

What Helps for Depression?

If you feel you are depressed, talk to someone. No matter how difficult it might be, talk to someone who can help, an adult you trust who won't judge you. Talk with your friends, they may understand more than you think.

If you can't talk face to face:



**Call Childline free on 0800 1111
or visit online: [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)**

Childline is free and confidential. You can talk to them about anything at any time. You don't even have to give your name if you don't want to.

Lifeline

0808 808 8000

Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000

Lifeline is a telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress. It's available 24/7 and is free to call on mobile.

SAMARITANS

Call 116 123

Call Samaritans free, day or night on 116 123

You can talk to a Samaritan at any time for free. You can also speak to them via email or by writing a letter. Sometimes, writing about how you feel can help work through what's on your mind, especially if it's upsetting to talk about them.



What Else Helps Depression?

Learning the facts, like through this guide is a great first step. The next one is talking to your GP who can help decide what help or treatment is right for you.

Lifestyle changes such as getting quality sleep, eating a healthy and balance diet, or finding an exercise you enjoy can help.

If you're feeling really low you may need to take anti-depressants. These don't always work for younger people or might make you feel a bit worse before you start to feel better. When they do work, they work well, but your GP will want to see you regularly while you are taking them.

The 5 most evidence-based steps to improving your mental health are:



1. Be Active

Our bodies release feel-good hormones when we're active that can also reduce anxiety and stress, and help us sleep better.



2. Take Notice

Savour the moment, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



3. Give

Do something nice for a loved one or stranger. Smile, volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group.



4. Connect

With the people around you - family, friends or neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



5. Keep Learning

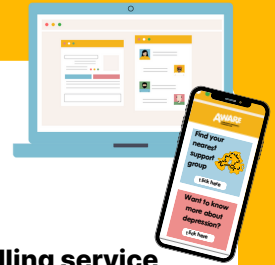
Do not be afraid to try something new. Rediscover an old hobby or interest, or simply set a challenge you will enjoy.



Do One Thing:

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when taking steps to help yourself. But remember to focus on doing just one thing at a time. It will help you reach the goals you set and give you a real sense of achievement.

Who to Contact for Support



Lifeline

A telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress. It is available 24/7 and free to call.

They can give you immediate support, offer face-to-face appointments, or give you information about other services in your area. Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.

You could also:

- See your GP or call the out-of-hours GP service
- Go to the A&E department
- Call emergency services on 999
- Call Samaritans on their freephone helpline 116 123 - a confidential listening service for those in distress

AWARE NI

You can read our guides for more information on support with depression and looking after your mental health.

Contact us by emailing info@aware-ni.org and visit our website at aware-ni.org

AWARE NI also have FREE mental health support groups for anyone aged 18 or over. You can find your nearest one by searching: aware-ni.org/support-groups/

