

For health insurance.
For Living



**Helping
someone else
with their
mental health**

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Mental health problems are a common human experience. Approximately, 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year¹.

If someone close to you is behaving in a way that seems different from usual, you may worry they are having difficulties with their mental health.

Some of these behaviours might include:

- seeming low and withdrawn
- getting tearful
- getting angry or aggressive easily
- seeming irritable or agitated
- worrying a lot and finding these worries very distressing

- struggling to sleep or sleeping much more than usual
- saying or doing things that are out of character
- drinking more or using more recreational drugs
- eating a lot more or a lot less than usual

Be careful not to jump to conclusions or a diagnosis. There are lots of reasons why people behave in different ways. It's important to talk to them, ask how they are and if they need any help.

Talking about mental health

Set aside some time when you won't be distracted. Some people find it easier to talk when sitting or walking side-by-side rather than facing each other. Go for a walk, do a job together or choose a time when you're driving.

You could start by saying you've noticed they have been behaving differently and you want to make sure they're okay.

Reassure them you're here if and when they want to talk.

Try to be patient and don't pressure them to talk before they're ready, or make assumptions about what they're feeling and why. Listen carefully and ask open-ended, direct questions about their feelings and experiences. Don't feel you need to fill every silence – sometimes taking a pause can help people keep talking.

Stay calm if you can. They need to feel they can open up without upsetting you. They might not want to talk right now. This can be frustrating. Remember that you've taken a good first step by letting them know you're there for them. They may come back to you when they're ready. Make sure you stay in touch and check in with them regularly.



1. www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems

How can I help?

If they would like some support for their mental health, there are lots of things you can do.

- Reassure them that they're not alone and that you're there to help them get support.
- Ask them what you can do to help.
- Look for more information about what they are experiencing and share it with them. Personal stories from others in similar situations can be really helpful too.
- Find out more about what is available locally. Help them make an appointment with their GP and plan what to say. Offer to go with them.

- Help them think about what they would like to ask a GP or health professional.
- Try and maintain some normality – chat about other parts of your life too.

What to do in an emergency

Sometimes it might feel as if they, and you, need more urgent support.

If they've harmed themselves, can't keep themselves safe or have a plan to end their life, the quickest way to get urgent support is to **call 999 or go to A&E**.

Stay with them if you can, or at least until help arrives.

What if they don't want any help?

It can be frustrating and upsetting if someone you're close to doesn't want to reach out for support when you feel it would be helpful. But we can't force people to talk to us or to seek help (unless it's a real emergency). Putting pressure on people before they're ready may make them less likely to open up, or to turn to us in the future.

There are still some things you could do.

- Make sure they know how to get help so that if and when they feel ready, they know what to do. You could share our information on **going to your GP about a mental health problem**.
- Remind them that you're there if they ever do want to talk. Stay in touch and check in with them regularly.

- If you want to talk to a health professional about your worries, you could make an appointment with your GP. They'll only be able to give you very general information and won't be able to discuss anyone else's health (even a family member) without their consent. However, they may be able to suggest options to help you stay well.
- Talk to someone you trust about your worries and make sure you look after yourself too.