

# Glossary.

## Mental health terms



The language of mental health can be confusing, with lots of terminology that you might not be familiar with. We've put together this glossary to help you understand things a little better.

### **Agoraphobia**

A fear of being in a place or situation where you feel you can't escape or where help might not be available if you become anxious.

### **Antidepressants**

A type of medicine used to treat depression. They're sometimes prescribed for other health problems such as chronic pain, and for other mental health conditions such as anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder.

### **Antipsychotics**

A type of medicine used for some mental health conditions: mainly schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, sometimes severe anxiety or depression.

### **Anxiety**

A range of mental and physical states, mainly arising from being consciously worried about the future, or afraid of an actual situation. It's a normal human response to lots of situations, but if it's persistent or out of proportion to the situation, it can be a symptom of poor mental health.

### **Beta-blockers**

A type of medicine commonly used for heart conditions, but also used to alleviate some symptoms of anxiety.

### **Bipolar disorder**

A mental health condition that causes repeated, severe mood swings. At different times your mood can vary from excitement and elation (called mania) to depression and despair.

### **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)**

A type of talking therapy that can help to change negative patterns in how you think, feel and behave. It's an effective therapy for many types of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.

### **Complementary therapies**

Methods of trying to treat illnesses, which fall outside of conventional medicine. Some of these claim to be able to treat mental health conditions. Always follow the advice of a doctor.

### **Compulsions**

Repeated behaviours or mental acts that you feel you need to do to get rid of or block obsessive thoughts. A symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

### **Counselling**

A type of talking therapy where a counsellor listens to what you have to say and then helps you to try and see your feelings and problems in a different way so you can arrive at answers yourself.

### **Depression**

A condition where you have a continuous low mood and/or a loss of interest and enjoyment in your life.

### **Diagnosis**

When a doctor identifies a condition based on signs, symptoms and test results.

### **Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)**

A treatment for severe depression. It involves having an electrical current passed through your brain to trigger a fit.

## Endorphins

Hormones that the body produces naturally that give a sense of wellbeing. Exercise can cause the release of endorphins.

## Episode

A period during which someone is experiencing poor mental health. Many mental health conditions involve episodes rather than being constant.

## Family therapy

A type of talking therapy where a therapist meets with your family in a safe environment to help you explore each other's points of view and relationships.

## Generalised anxiety disorder

A long-term condition where you regularly feel very worried about a range of everyday things.

## GP

A local doctor who can treat all common medical conditions and refer patients to hospitals and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment.

## Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

An NHS-run talking therapies programme in England. Your GP may refer you to IAPT for certain mental health problems.

## Insomnia

A condition where you find it difficult getting to sleep or staying asleep for long enough to feel refreshed the next morning.

## Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT)

A talking therapy used to treat depression. It works by helping you understand how your depression may be linked to your relationships and how they work.

## Isolation

Isolation, or social isolation, means having a low level of social contact in your daily life. It can increase your risk of poor mental health.

## Light therapy

A treatment sometimes used for seasonal affective disorder. It involves exposing you to bright artificial light to make up for the shortage of natural daylight in winter.

## Mania

An energetic mood of excitement and elation. It is a symptom of bipolar disorder.

## Manic depression

Another term for bipolar disorder.

## Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)

These are a type of antidepressant medicine.

## Meditation

An ancient 'mind-body' practice used to increase calmness and enhance overall wellbeing. Has some similarities with mindfulness.

## Mindfulness

A 'mind-body' practice that helps people manage their thoughts and feelings. It focuses on paying attention to the present moment. Mindfulness forms the basis of some mental health treatments.

## Mood stabilisers

A medicine sometimes prescribed for bipolar disorder, to prevent mood disturbances or treat a manic episode.

## Obsessions

Unwanted thoughts, images or urges that keep coming into your mind over and over again. A symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

## Obsessive-compulsive disorder

A condition where you have obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviours (things you feel you must do) or both.

### **Panic attack**

A period of severe fear and overwhelming physical feelings.

### **Panic disorder**

A type of anxiety that may be diagnosed if you have repeated and unexpected panic attacks for a month or more.

### **Phobia**

An extreme form of anxiety or fear of a specific object or situation, which is out of proportion to the actual threat or danger the situation poses.

### **Postnatal depression**

A type of depression that you can develop after having a baby.

### **Post-traumatic stress disorder**

A condition that affects people who have experienced or witnessed a highly traumatic or catastrophic event.

### **Progressive muscle relaxation**

A technique that involves tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups. It helps bring awareness to your body and may help you to fall into a state of deep relaxation.

### **Psychiatrist**

A medical doctor who specialises in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental health conditions.

### **Psychological therapist**

A practitioner of psychological therapy. They deliver interventions to help people understand and make changes to their thinking, behaviour and relationships, to improve mental wellbeing.

### **Psychosis**

A severe, confused mental state that may involve hallucinations, false beliefs, and difficulty thinking logically. It's often a symptom of conditions like schizophrenia.

### **Relapse**

When a condition that appeared to have improved or gone away comes back.

### **Relaxation techniques**

Things you can do yourself to try and relax and manage stressful situations.

### **Resilience**

Your tolerance level to pressure before it turns into stress. You can improve resilience by living a healthy lifestyle and changing how you think and behave in certain situations.

### **Seasonal affective disorder**

A seasonal form of depression. This means you get symptoms at the same time every year, usually around autumn and winter.

### **Sectioning**

When someone needs to be detained and treated without their agreement, for mental health reasons. Usually happens in emergency situations.

### **Self-help**

This can be a 'light-touch' self-guided treatment prescribed by your doctor. Or it can refer to a more general self-guided approach to looking after your mental wellbeing day-to-day.

### **Serotonin-noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)**

These are a type of antidepressant medicine.

### **Social anxiety disorder**

A fear of being watched and judged in social or performance situations.

### **Social phobia**

See social anxiety disorder.

### **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)**

These are the most commonly prescribed type of antidepressant medicine.

### **Stress**

How you feel and respond when life puts you under a lot of pressure. It's not a mental health condition itself, but stress can increase your risk of poor mental health.

## Symptoms

Evidence or a sign of a health condition that the person with the condition notices themselves. An example for mental health might be low mood.

## Talking therapies

A type of treatment that involves talking to a trained professional about your feelings. This may help you feel better if you're going through a difficult time.

## Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)

These are a type of antidepressant medicine.

## Trauma

An extremely upsetting, stressful or threatening situation.

## Treatment

Something that aims to reduce or remove the symptoms of a mental health condition.