

How to support someone struggling with their Mental Health

The current coronavirus crisis is an anxious and worrying time for all of us. But for some, either on their own or in a household, possibly self-isolating, the anxiety can become all consuming.

We all go through tough times and people help us through them. Other times we have been worried about other people's mental health. Whether they are a friend, family member or colleague, there are many ways to support somebody you care about

Talking to someone who is struggling with their mental health:

1 Take your time

Make sure you're prepared and have time to make the call. Trying to squeeze it in between other commitments isn't fair on you or the person you're calling. Think about how much time you have and stick to it. Remove distractions so you can focus and try to ensure that you are not interrupted.

2 Don't try and diagnose or second guess their symptoms

While you may be happy to offer support, you are not a trained counsellor. Try not to make assumptions or offer medical support. There are a range of services below that you can recommend.

3 Let them share as little or as much as they want

Don't pressurize them to talk. Let them lead the discussion and talk at their own pace. You might be the first person they are talking to.

4 Always keep the questions open ended

It is important to keep the language as neutral as possible. Ask 'Why don't you tell me how you are feeling?' Rather than 'Are you feeling low today?'

5 Be patient

Being patient is the key to helping and guiding someone to access the right support services. Just take your time and listen carefully to what they tell you. Take some time to talk to them with no distractions

Recognising different types of mental health:

Depression	Panic attacks
<p>People who are depressed may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have low confidence• Lose interest in activities they normal enjoy• Lose their appetite• Get tired easily• Be tearful, nervous or irritable• At worst they may feel suicidal	<p>Panic attacks are usually a sign of anxiety. Someone having a panic attack experiences a sudden and intense sensation of fear. They may breathe rapidly, sweat, feel very hot or cold, feel sick or feel faint.</p>
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	Anxiety
<p>OCD is a common form of anxiety involving distressing repetitive thoughts. Compulsions are the actions which people feel they must repeat to feel less anxious or stop their obsessive thoughts</p>	<p>People experiencing anxiety may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have difficulty concentrating• Be irritable• Try to avoid certain situations• Appear pale and tense• Be easily startled by everyday sound

More information

For more information on recognising mental health problems visit our webpage at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/adult-social-care/covid19-community-response>

There are a range of local and national services that can offer support

- The Samaritans offer emotional support 24 hours a day, in full confidence. Call 116 123
- Mind provides information on a range of mental health topics to support people. Call 0300 123 3393 or visit <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- Community Mental Health Team Call: 0300 365 0300
- For none urgent NHS matters call 111

If it is a real emergency call 999

Further information and services can be found at the NHS East Berkshire CCG hub <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/coronavirus/mental-wellbeing-while-staying-at-home/>