



FACT SHEET

It's good to talk

Humans are social beings and thrive from contact with others – a fact which was highlighted when our social connections were abruptly cut off by the restrictions imposed to combat Covid-19.

Without adequate social connection, we can become lonely and more vulnerable to mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

And when we are suffering from mental ill health, talking to others can be a powerful and valuable means of alleviating our condition – whether it's unburdening about what's troubling us or simply spending time in others' company.



How would I know if I need help?

It's not always easy to tell when our mental health might be taking a turn for the worse, but asking yourself the following questions will help you judge:

These include:

- > Do I feel content?
- > Do I sleep well?
- > Am I irritable? Or overwhelmed?
- > Am I worrying about the future or my mind is dwelling on the past, or on what's not right?
- > Do I allocate time each day for myself, for my needs?
- > Have I got a list of my needs / Am I aware of my needs?

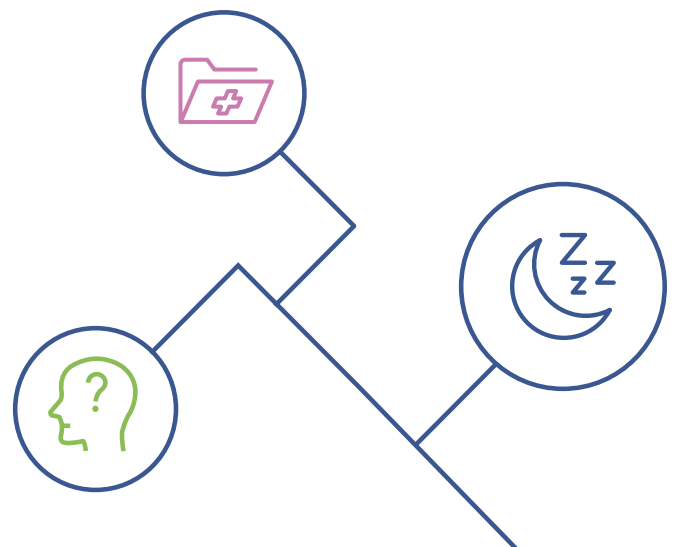


What might be wrong?

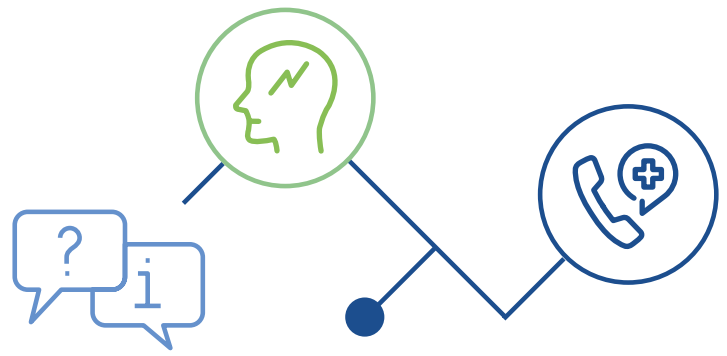
If something does not feel right, it will be necessary to explore further. Do you feel you are in charge of your life, or does it feel like things are just happening to you?

In our journey through life we experience many challenges, and it could be:

- > Relationship issues
- > Loneliness
- > Life does not seem to have a meaning or a purpose
- > Feeling down, depressed or hopelessness
- > Worrying too much about different things
- > Insomnia
- > Too tired
- > Too busy / overwhelmed / on edge
- > Health anxiety
- > Health issues, acute or chronic illnesses
- > Stages in life - e.g. career progression, having young children, menopause, caring for elderly parents
- > Bereavement
- > Addiction - e.g. cigarette, alcohol, gambling



Depending on the situation, you should talk to your friends or ask for professional help – usually with your GP or occupational health physician as the first point of contact. It may also be possible to self-refer to a local mental health team.



Some things you can do

Create time for yourself

Our lives often feel too busy. Our time and focus are distributed over many different things and other people, rather than for our own wellbeing.

So it is healthy and essential to create space for yourself, create packets of time during the day/week which can be used for self-care, seeing friends (or staying in touch remotely) and simply to do things which make you happy, fulfilled and content.

Write a letter

Negative thoughts can sometimes feel all-pervasive, but it can help to write them down in order to examine and better understand them.

Writing a letter (or an email) to a friend is a great way to share our worries, giving space to reflect and compose our thoughts between responses.

If you don't wish to share your thoughts with someone you know, The Samaritans has a freepost address for people to send letters to (along with an email address and phonenumber).

Call someone

If things are reaching a head and your problems feel urgent, a more immediate solution is to pick up the phone and call a friend, your doctor or an organisation like The Samaritans.

If you are in work and have access to an employee assistance programme (EAP), it is very likely to offer a telephone counselling service. Ask your HR department for the EAP number in the first instance, you don't need to say why.

Counselling

Counselling is a form of talking therapy during which patients are encouraged to talk about their feelings with a trained therapist.

It can take place face-to-face, in a group, over the phone or even by email or online chat.

The therapist will not usually offer advice, but it can be very helpful in understanding one's feelings and thought processes.



Other talking therapies

You may also be offered cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), guided self-help or other talking therapies such as interpersonal therapy (IT), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) or behavioural activation.

These will all usually be offered over a course of treatment, perhaps between six and 20 sessions, depending on treatment and patient needs.

Self-care

Good sleep, good nutrition, good hydration and staying active (regular exercising) is the essence of staying healthy in body and mind.

Tending to all of these factors has been shown to improve wellbeing – and many people opt to use a device or app to help them track the above and more.

Meditation

In a nutshell, when we are anxious our biological body goes into fight-or-flight mode. This is when we get a surge of energy - which can cause a pounding heart, breathlessness, insomnia, irritability and difficulty focusing.

Meditation helps in many ways. For example, deep-breathing exercises slow down the heart rate and counteract the fight-or-flight mode. Meditation helps us to stay in present time - and by observing our thoughts, the intensity of emotion decreases.

Resources

- > [The Samaritans](#)
- > [NHS: Talking therapies](#)
- > [Mind: Tips to manage loneliness](#)



**It's always good to talk,
even when you think
nothing can be done.**



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