

Feeling Blue? We can help you...

When people hear the words 'mental health', many immediately assume the conversation will not apply to them. They think 'I don't have depression,' or 'people just need to get a grip everyone gets stressed.' With this blog we aim to debunk some of the myths around mental health – which, by the way, everybody has the same way we all have physical health.

Fact vs Fiction.

Contrary to popular belief, mental health is a general term for our mental wellbeing, whether good or bad. It is safe to say that everyone has experienced varied amounts of stress or pressure throughout their life, but when does stress become something more? Mental health is not just mental disorder. It is a state of well-being in which everyone realizes what levels of stress he or she can cope with. Mental wellbeing is looking after your mind set; it is also looking after yourself physically and emotionally. If you look after yourself physically and mentally then you are less likely to stress.

Signs of poor mental health to look out for can include:

- A sudden change in behaviour
- Constant bad or 'down' days
- Distancing themselves from people or places
- Lack of interest in normal activities and lack of participation
- Overly emotional response



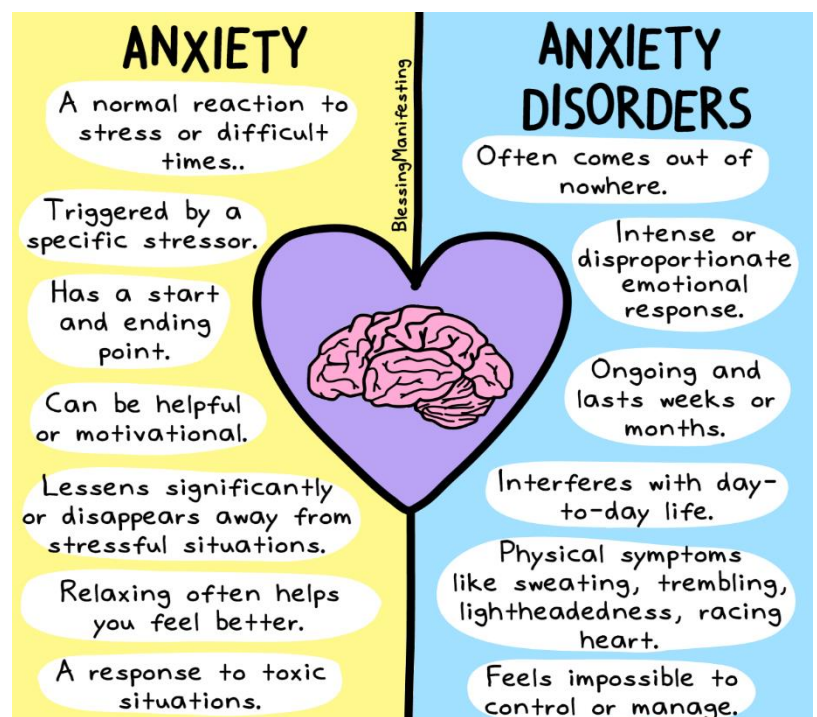
Anxiety

Experiencing a level of anxiety during a stressful or difficult time is perfectly normal. In fact this has kept the human race alive since the cave dwellers used their fight or flight response to survive. According to study the NHS has taken out anxiety is something, everyone experiences at times, and feeling anxious is a perfectly natural reaction to some situations however sometimes feelings of anxiety can be constant, overwhelming or out of proportion to the situation and this can affect your daily life.

However, especially over recent years, we see increasing numbers of people being diagnosed with anxiety disorders, but what are they?

Type of anxiety disorder	Description
Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)	Feeling anxious about a wide variety of things on most days over a long period of time (e.g. six months)
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	Ongoing unwanted/intrusive thoughts and fears that cause anxiety (obsessions) and a need to carry out certain rituals in order to feel less anxious (compulsions)
Panic disorder	Frequent attacks of intense feelings of anxiety that seem like they cannot be brought under control; this may go on to be associated with avoidance of certain situations (e.g. going into crowded places)
Social phobia	Intense fear of criticism, being embarrassed or humiliated, even in everyday situations (e.g. eating in public or making small talk)
Specific phobia	Fearful feelings about a particular object or situation (e.g. going near an animal, flying on a plane or receiving an injection)
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	Bursts of anxiety any time from one month after experiencing a traumatic event (e.g. a traumatic delivery, sexual assault or violence).

It is important to recognise the difference between a normal response to stress and actual anxiety disorders.



Depression

Everyone has bad days, but when do bad days turn into something more?

Depression is a mental disorder, which causes you to feel down for weeks or even months. If you have depression, you may often feel hopeless and disinterested in things you have loved for a long time. It can make you feel guilt-ridden, indecisive and anxious. Your self-esteem, confidence and energy levels will be low if you have depression. Many different things such as a stressful or traumatic life event can cause depression. When this happens, you are likely to go into a downward spiral, which makes you feel low and nervous for a long period. Some studies have shown that you are more likely to get depression as you get older or live in poor living conditions. Depression can be very dangerous and make you have suicidal thoughts so if you are experiencing these symptoms every day for 2 weeks or more talk to someone.

Telltale Signs of DEPRESSION

Everyone feels sad, lonely or depressed at times. But when these feelings last for a long time and become overwhelming, it maybe time to seek medical help.

- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities
- Difficulty remembering, concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Feeling worthless, guilty or helpless
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
- Continuous sad, anxious, or negative thoughts
- Thoughts of suicide, or suicide attempts
- Feeling irritable or having a short temper
- Feeling fatigued

Sources: webmd.com | helpguide.org | mayoclinic.com

TYPES OF DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)- 5 brings forth, 8 categories of depressive disorders. These are as follows-

- 1 DISRUPTIVE MOOD DYSREGULATION DISORDER**
Severe, chronic and persistent irritability, temper outbursts, out of proportion behavior
- 2 MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**
Depressed moods, loss of interest, weight fluctuation, psychomotor agitation, concentration issues
- 3 DYSTHYMIA OR PERSISTENT DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**
Depressed mood, low energy, hopelessness, MDD for 2 years, fatigue, sleep disturbance, appetite change, etc. for 2 months
- 4 PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER**
Affective disturbances, irritability, anxiety symptoms, physical symptoms, change in appetitet
- 5 SUBSTANCE/ MEDICATION INDUCED DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**
Substance/medication induced depressed moods, loss of pleasure or interest
- 6 DEPRESSIVE DISORDER DUE TO ANOTHER MEDICAL CONDITION**
Physiological effects of a medical condition leading to depressive disorder.
- 7 OTHER SPECIFIED DISORDER**
Predominant depressive characteristics, however, does not meets the full criteria of the disorder. Known etiology for this condition.
- 8 UNSPECIFIED DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**
Presentation of depressive disorder symptoms, but, does not meets the full criteria. Unknown etiology and insufficient information.

Help

If you feel like you are living with either of these mental illnesses there are places you can go to that can help you – never suffer alone!

For example, you could go to see a psychiatrist. This is someone who specialises in coping and preventing methods of mental health disorders.

Alternatively, if you are struggling with the concept of having a mental illness or wish to keep it anonymous until you can tell your parent or guardians there is a great programme at our school that gives you help and advice that aids you to recovery without travel – See Mrs Scholey for more information.

Miriam, our Chaplain is always available to talk to and to offer guidance as well.



There are also some simple things that you can try to do entirely on your own, for example:

- Notice the simple things around you to help you take time out and relax
- Connect with other people
- Learn something new to help you with your confidence
- Give a little thought or time into an act of generosity, which can reduce stress
- Activity releases chemicals in your brain to help you concentrate, feel and sleep better

TYPES OF COPING SKILLS

Websites you can visit if you or someone you know needs support:

- The Samaritans
- Child line
- Young minds
- Specialist support
+448083022870

Please check out these videos:

Fight Flight Freeze – A Guide to Anxiety for Kids
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

Speak Up for Kids: Depression
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-qzDRqrxC4>

<p>Self-Soothing (Comforting yourself through your five senses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Something to touch (ex: stuffed animal, stress ball) 2. Something to hear (ex: music, meditation guides) 3. Something to see (ex: snowglobe, happy pictures) 4. Something to taste (ex: mints, tea, sour candy) 5. Something to smell (ex: lotion, candles, perfume) 	<p>Distraction (Taking your mind off the problem for a while)</p> <p>Examples: Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.</p>	<p>Opposite Action (Doing something the opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affirmations and Inspiration (ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images) 2. Something funny or cheering (ex: funny movies / TV / books)
<p>Emotional Awareness (Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)</p> <p>Examples: A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing / art supplies</p>	<p>Mindfulness (Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)</p> <p>Examples: Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises.</p>	<p>Crisis Plan (Contact info of supports and resources, for when coping skills aren't enough.)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Family / Friends Therapist Psychiatrist Hotline Crisis Team / ER 911 </div>