



Looking after your
mental health



What is good mental health?

Having good mental health means feeling positive about yourself, being able to cope with everyday pressures and being able to form and maintain relationships.

We accept the importance of looking after our physical health. But it's just as important to look after our mental health. In fact, poor mental health can lead to poor physical health.

Who is affected?

Anyone can suffer from poor mental health. It affects more people than you'd think - at least one in five of the population.

When we think of poor mental health we often think of certain conditions such as schizophrenia or depression. But mental health problems also include common conditions that can affect us all, such as stress, anxiety and 'feeling down'.



When stress becomes distress

A little bit of stress can be a good thing, but too much is bad for both your physical and mental health.

If you:

- feel anxious, worried or overwhelmed by problems;
- notice changes in your sleeping or eating patterns;
- are angry for no reason;
- are finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions;

you've moved from stress to distress.

You can help yourself by taking some of the positive steps outlined opposite.





Looking after your mental health

We tend to think that mental health is something we have no control over. This is not true.

We can do a number of things to promote and protect our mental health:



- **Keep active** - regular exercise can help you feel more positive.
- **Get involved** - join a club, meet up with friends, do a course, learn something new.
- **Accept yourself** - we're all different and nobody's perfect.
- **Relax** - if too much busyness is getting you down, make time to relax and unwind. It's also important to get a good night's sleep.
- **Drink in moderation** - overdoing it can make things worse.
- **Eat healthily** - it will help you feel better and give you more energy.
- **Recognise the signs** - being mentally healthy means being able to deal with daily pressures; if you feel you can't cope, or are turning to alcohol or drugs to get by, you may have a problem you need help with.
- **Ask for help** - if you were feeling physically sick you'd see a doctor; don't be embarrassed about seeking help for a mental health problem.



It's a fact of life

Having a mental health problem is no different to having a physical health problem. It's a matter of recognising the symptoms, finding a way of treating them and taking steps to prevent the problem happening again by looking after your mental health.

Ignoring mental health problems in yourself or in others won't make them go away. In fact, it could make them get worse.

Poor mental health is nothing to be afraid of, or embarrassed about. If you feel you have a problem, open up and talk about it; if you see the signs in others, encourage them to talk about it.

Talk to a friend, talk to someone in your family or talk to your doctor.

Look after your mental health

For information about sources of help and support log on to

www.mindingyourhead.info



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Public Health Agency, Ormeau Avenue Unit, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast
BT2 8HS. Tel: 028 9031 1611. Textphone/Text Relay: 18001 028 9031 1611.
www.publichealth.hscni.net