



HELPING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

12 things to try
when a loved one
is struggling

WHEN IT COMES TO LOOKING AFTER SCOTLAND'S MENTAL HEALTH, WE HAVE A HUGE ROLE TO PLAY AS FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS.

As a family member or friend you are one of the people who see your loved ones - or speak to them on the phone - most regularly. As such, you are likely to notice when the people you care about are acting differently. You can pick up when they are not looking after themselves as well as they normally do. You will see things that most other people, including work colleagues, would not see. If you notice some changes in someone you care about, it could be that there is something really challenging happening in their life - like work stress, the pressure of job-hunting, or a relationship break-up.

But sometimes this will be because the person is experiencing a mental health issue. This factsheet aims to help you think about your role in looking after the mental health of those around you - through twelve simple ideas.

TRY TO BE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY....

It's important that everyone in Scotland knows a little bit about mental health issues, and is open to the possibility that the people they are close to will sometimes struggle to maintain their mental health and wellbeing. Research shows that 1 in 4 people in Scotland experience a mental health issue in any one year, so it is vital to be prepared, open, and ready to talk about mental health. And in learning to look after each other, you can also learn some good ways of looking after your own mental health in case you find yourself struggling.

Some people suffer recurrently from mental health issues over their lifetime, whilst others will experience a single episode of difficulties. Mental health problems might be related directly to life circumstances - for example someone with a difficult job may find that they struggle to manage their stress levels, or a relationship break-up might lead on to a period of depression. Mental health issues can also come about with no known cause and this in itself can be distressing.

Once a mental health issue takes root it can start to effect every area of the person's life - home life, relationships, work and hobbies. It may be that before you even think about labels like depression, you simply notice that the person is not washing their hair very often and doesn't have as much to say as usual. This can be the case for the person who is struggling too - they might not be seeing their situation as 'being depressed'. They might just be aware they don't enjoy life nearly as much anymore. In looking after your family and friends, one of the most important messages to be aware of is that recovery from mental health issues is usually possible and achievable. You can play a vital role in spreading that message while you are looking after those around you.

READ ON FOR TWELVE SIMPLE IDEAS YOU CAN TRY



1 Learn a little bit about mental health:

If you are going to be vigilant to the wellbeing of those around you, then it is useful to take a bit of time to find out about the signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions. This helps you understand what behaviour to look out for. Ask yourself how many of these conditions you can describe, and how you might notice the symptoms:

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION	WHAT BEHAVIOUR MIGHT YOU NOTICE?
<p>Depression Severe and long-standing low mood - distinct from more day-to-day experiences of feeling down.</p>	A lack of motivation, sadness and crying, becoming more isolated from friends and family.
<p>Bipolar disorder Fluctuating moods between low, depressive moods and 'high' periods. There are different kinds of bipolar disorder that have different patterns. The changes in mood can happen at different frequencies and the mood changes may not always include both 'peaks' and 'troughs'.</p>	Changeable behaviour, high energy and risk-taking during high periods accompanied by other periods of despair and lack of motivation.
<p>Anxiety Anxiety over and above usual day-to-day anxiety, which can result in difficulties with everyday life and sometimes 'panic attacks'.</p>	Strong reactions to some situations - including palpitations, flushed cheeks, hyperventilation, broken speech. Needing to leave social or work situations urgently at times. Anxiety that appears to be over and above what you would expect.
<p>Schizophrenia A complex mental health issue which impacts in a number of ways on thoughts, feelings and behaviour. This can include being withdrawn or restless, having hallucinations (i.e. hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling or tasting something that does not exist). The most common hallucination is hearing voices. Those with schizophrenia can also experience delusions and paranoia.</p>	Struggling with everyday life. Talking about voices that nobody else can hear. Reference to events that seem highly unlikely. An unusual sense of 'cause and effect'. Explanation of conspiracy theories which appear implausible.

These are just a few of the wide range of mental health conditions. Whether or not you have concerns just now, take an evening and do a bit of reading online as it could come in useful in future. There is a list of good quality information resources at the end of this factsheet. Reading up on mental health will allow you to broach the subject of mental wellbeing from an informed position.

If a loved one's behaviour changes, trust your instincts. Personalities and behaviours don't normally change without a reason. It may be that they are suffering from a mental health issue. The information you find may prove useful now or in the future in broaching the subject with them directly - or in raising your concerns with the persons GP if you ever get to the stage you think you need to do that.

2 Take a deep breath and think about what not to say

Once you've identified that you think a loved one is struggling, it is time to think about how to talk to them about what's going on. As well as thinking what kind of conversation you would like to have with the person you are worried about, it's also important to think objectively about what kind of conversation you *don't* want to have.

Taking a bit of time to think about this objectively can avoid classic 'mistakes' where someone tries to find out whether their loved one is struggling but finds they are completely unwilling to talk about the situation. Sometimes this cannot be avoided, but thinking first about 'what not to say' can also help you to put yourself in the other person's position and approach the conversation carefully and caringly.

It is also worth self-checking to make sure you aren't going to approach the situation in a way that could seem unhelpful or a bit aggressive. Remember if the person you are concerned about is struggling with their mental health then they may find it really difficult to cope with any criticism or aggression at all. Often family members and friends will focus on the things they are concerned about (a messy house or lack of effort with finding a job) rather than the person inside and this might feel a bit like 'an attack'.

Try to avoid the easy mistake of thinking that commenting on someone's changed behaviour is the same as 'opening the door' to them sharing their feelings with you. And try to avoid comments that will make the person feel guilty or worsen their mood or sense of self-esteem.

Thinking first about 'what not to say' can help you to put yourself in the other person's position and approach the conversation carefully and caringly.

Consider how you might feel if you were feeling low and someone said:

Are you down in the dumps again? I wish you could snap out of it.



Pull yourself together – you are so unpredictable these days.

You seem like you're off in your own world again. You didn't used to be like this.

Aside from avoiding this kind of opener, remember that if you want to talk properly, it's important to avoid starting a conversation when there are too many other distractions. Asking about someone's mental wellbeing with Eastenders blaring in the background probably won't work very well.

And when starting a conversation, be clear with yourself from the outset that you will avoid mixing concern and criticism if at all possible. Even if you have a list of criticisms a page long about what is going on in the person's day-to-day life, remind yourself that you will never find out what is really going on if you keep coming back to criticisms in your discussion. You want to find out *why* the person feels things are not going right at the moment – not simply remind them of the problems they are facing as they appear to you.

Don't speak too quickly or frantically. If someone is feeling depressed, for example, they may find it difficult to process information quickly and might misinterpret your speed as aggression. You need to give them positive affirmation through speaking to them – to start by letting them know you are there to listen and that you care.

3 Prepare to ask how things are – and to listen genuinely to the response

It's important not to be afraid of speaking to your friends and family about their mental wellbeing. Speak to them normally, remembering that you know them well and are well-placed to notice when things are not right. Here are some tips to help.

Choose a place and time when you will be able to talk privately.



Start with a simple question:

"How are things with you just now?"
"You seem to be struggling at the moment?"
"We don't need to talk right now, but I'm here"



Make clear you are asking about the person and their wellbeing and not talking about everyday things or asking for a progress report on their day-to-day life

Remember if the person is struggling with day-to-day life this could feel like 'an attack'.



Speak slowly and calmly, in a low and private tone of voice.

Show with your body language that you are open to hearing what they have to say. Try: *"Take your time"* or *"I'm listening"*



Remember that the most important thing is to create the space to hear what is going on for the person you are concerned about.

Give plenty of time and space for the person to speak with you – remembering they may need extra time if they are struggling or find it difficult to share their feelings.

Remember too that allowing silences to develop will show that you are listening.



Keep things objective – talk about what patterns of behaviour you've noticed or reflect back what you've heard them tell you.

"Yes, I've noticed you haven't been calling people lately."

"It sounds like you are feeling really terrible/sad/hopeless at the moment"

Once you have started talking, try not to interrupt too much or dismiss concerns.

Control the natural tendency to rationalise or over-rationalise what you hear if you can. If you tell the person you're concerned about exactly what you think they should do start feeling better, for example, this might be too much for them and might make them feel you are trying to take over their situation or trivialise the issues they are struggling with.



Keep your cool if you can, even if what you hear worries, angers, upsets or scares you. But remember no-one is super-human and it is completely acceptable to feel distressed and angry at the same time as supporting someone.



Let the person you are concerned about rationalise the situation themselves – asking open questions to help them doing this.

"What would you like to do from here?"
"Is there anything you feel you could tackle just now?"

"Do you feel able to phone up the doctor for an appointment?"

"Would you like me to help?"



Try to make at least one agreement together about the way forward – no matter how small the step forward seems.

Really meaningful steps towards improved mental wellbeing need to come from the person who is struggling. There might also be things that you can do to help.



Give reassurance that you will continue to listen and help and agree when you will talk about the situation again.

4 Avoid sounding as though you are providing a diagnosis

Remember that if you do find information on mental health conditions and symptoms that seem to apply to someone you know, it's important to avoid the assumption that you have already 'diagnosed' them. Think carefully about whether to show them the information directly or simply tell them the symptoms you have noticed and ask them to speak to the GP, bearing in mind that with some conditions (e.g. schizophrenia), the person might not actually be conscious of some of the symptoms that you notice. Even with other conditions like depression or anxiety, some people will respond better to discussing possible symptoms that you have noticed as changes in their behaviour rather than whether or not they have a particular condition. This is very much a judgement call, but is worth thinking about.

If you think the person that you are worried about might respond reasonably well to seeing some information on mental health conditions and symptoms then:

- Show them what you have found
- Try to give them information on a range of conditions rather than appear to be trying to 'diagnose' them
- Ask them what they think and if they notice the same symptoms you do
- Respect it if they don't want to pursue a diagnosis just now
- If you think they might want to get information on their symptoms independently, give them the SAMH website address (www.samh.org.uk) and National Mental Health Information Service contact details
- Always emphasise that to get a proper diagnosis they should speak to their GP.

When you discuss mental health conditions and symptoms, it is really useful if you can spread the message that there is no shame in experiencing mental health issues – named or unnamed. It is also important to emphasise that recovery – or an improvement in mental wellbeing – is almost always possible and that routes to recovery can include medical treatments (talking therapies, medications), support and activities in the community, and personal lifestyle changes.



Recovery – or an improvement in mental wellbeing – is almost always possible

5 Give your loved one a copy of the SAMH Know Where To Go guide

This is a useful guide produced by SAMH to give a range of contacts and ideas for those experiencing mental health issues. The guide aims to present a range of options and ideas rather than tell people what they must do – acknowledging that while sometimes its relevant to go straight to the doctor, it can be equally relevant to start working on your mental wellbeing elsewhere – for example through an exercise or lifeskills class like Tools for Living. Download a copy from www.samh.org.uk or contact the National Mental Health Information Service to request a copy.

The directory section of this factsheet is also very useful – containing details of the information and support SAMH can provide as well as listing a number of other online and telephone options for support with mental health. Many people don't know about these resources, which range from online mental wellbeing programmes to information and support helplines, and telephone-based therapy in some areas of Scotland. There is also a very useful public information website on the benefits of talking therapies, and what to expect from a counselling appointment.

It could be invaluable to pass on these details to your loved one, as they may be able to find a way to start working on their mental wellbeing in a structured way from the safety of their own home if they have internet or telephone access.



6 Do what you can to help

Every time you create time to speak to the person that you're worried about, you will be hoping to give them the encouragement to identify one or two things which they can do to start improving their mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing is a hugely personal thing. It is about what keeps that person ticking, what keeps them enjoying life, and what helps them to take control of their situation. While it is important that the person takes independent steps towards wellbeing, you could offer to do any number of apparently 'small' things which could help significantly. Wellbeing is also about feeling connected and supported.

Try working through our checklist below for inspiration. Cut the page out and speak to the person you're concerned about and ask what might help. Or if the person is really low – be more firm about what you can do to help. This is not about taking on that person's burdens or running their life for them – but instead is about giving them the help and support to kick-start their natural instinct for looking after their own wellbeing. Discuss this with the person you're worried about, using the check-list to mark any ideas the person feels would be useful. Use the last section to note anything else you agree together to do.

You might need to help out just a few times, or you might find that over a period of time it helps considerably if you do something special to help every few weeks or every few months.

What I can do to help.....Cut out and chat through together.....

Give a heart-felt hug when you meet even if you wouldn't usually do that.	Plan a road or rail trip to somewhere new together.	For immediate family, agree to go to bed at the same time every night to help get plenty sleep.	Give the person you're worried about a new diary to keep their thoughts in.
Find out what self-referral lifeskills courses and support services there are in your area.	Make a collection of relaxing music on CD or i-tunes together.	Help tidy up the house and create a calm space in the home.	Look at some old photographs, chat, and create a photograph album.
Go along to the GP together to help explain the situation.	Sit down with the person you're worried about and give support in organising their finances - opening letters and paying unpaid bills.	Help to set up online shopping to get healthy and nutritious food delivered easily.	
Help plan the week's activities in a diary or calendar – and discuss prioritising all the things that need done.		Start a practical or craft project together – woodwork, baking or photography for example	Give some help with writing or proof-reading employment or benefits applications if this is a hurdle.
Make a batch of meals together to freeze for the coming fortnight together.		Set up a Moodscope account together for tracking wellbeing day-to-day – including the option for the person to share this information with you and other friends and family so you know how they are doing.	Look for services offering job-search support in the area if they are looking for a job.
Phone the SAMH National Mental Health Information Service to find out about services and support available locally.	Find out about 'mindfulness' or alternative therapies options in your area – help by booking an appointment or going along together.		

Help them prepare to speak to the GP and ask for a referral to the Community Mental Health Team – or go along together to explain day-to-day difficulties.	Agree to switch off the TV at certain times to allow more time for talking.	Make a list together of outstanding jobs in day-to-day life that need sorted out.	
	Buy the person a subscription to an online wellbeing service like Big White Wall or Mindfulness Online.	Look at online mental wellbeing resources together using the factsheet directory.	
		Find out if there's a Tools For Living course in the area.	Stay connected in an unusual and heartfelt way by writing a letter.
		Visit an area of natural beauty together	
Help organise a close gathering of friends at your house or theirs	Suggest you take the kids overnight	Go for a spa treatment together	Plan to talk on Skype if you don't live near each other.

What we have agreed I'll do to help...

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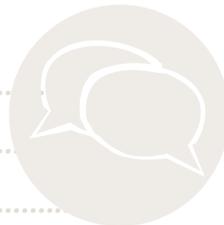
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7 Suggest tracking feelings and symptoms each day:

When someone is struggling with their mental health, it can be hard to get the perspective to fully understand what is wrong and how they can put it right. If someone is depressed, for example, they can feel like they are in a kind of tunnel which is negative and hopeless and although they might feel better some days than others they don't always recognise why that is.

By encouraging your loved one to keep track of how they are doing day-to-day, this might help them to build up really valuable self-knowledge that could be the key to their recovery. By taking the step to actively track their mood in a diary or with an online mood-tracking tool, this could help them take a step from 'passive' experience of mental health issues, to a more 'active' position in terms becoming self-aware about their difficulties and actively trying to take positive steps to get their mental wellbeing back.

Diaries and mood-tracking tools can also help to articulate what is going on to a doctor or psychiatrist. Suggest that your loved one takes along a diary or mood calendar to their GP appointment where they are trying to explain the mental health problems they are experiencing. See the directory at the end of this factsheet for ideas of websites to visit.

Some sites have an option to share information with your friends and family. For example, Moodscope allows you to share your mood chart and notes with a set number of people. You could suggest this as a way to stay in touch with how your family member or friend is feeling. Seeing how they are feeling on a daily basis in factual terms might boost your resilience for dealing with challenging circumstances and help you identify when things are getting significantly worse for them.

8 Give support in getting professional help

Going to see the doctor can be a huge step towards recovery, but can also be a very difficult process as for many people it means admitting there is an issue and dealing with the fear of being judged or not believed or understood. Sometimes people are not sure exactly how their doctor can help or they may be resistant to going to the doctor because they are sure they don't want to try particular treatments. They may feel firmly against the idea of becoming dependent on medications; or they may feel that counselling/talking therapies are pointless and won't help.

Speaking to the GP can help to access treatment – and can help make the doctor aware of how things are just now in case the situation gets worse over time.

You can:

- Suggest they ask for a double appointment to allow more time to talk
- Suggest they write a list of things of the issues they want to discuss
- Ask if they would like to practice what they will say to the doctor with you
- Suggest keeping a diary of how they are feeling day-to-day, noting any significant situations or relationships that are contributing to how they are feeling.
- Offer to attend the appointment with them.

Place the ball in their court – the important thing is that they make the decisions if possible, and that they feel supported. If you offer to attend a GP's appointment with the person, it might be helpful to say why you think it would be useful for you to be there. For example, is your offer purely for moral support? Or are there certain symptoms or behaviours which you think you might be able to describe to the GP which the person themselves might struggle with or avoid? If so, say what these are and how you would describe them if you were to go along.

Read more about preparing for a GP appointment at www.nhsinform.co.uk/MentalHealth/AccessingHelp/Available-Help/Preparing

It is also helpful if you can help your loved one identify if they are in need of more than GP support. Some support is only available through referral to your Community Mental Health Team – which is part of the social work department at your local council. The Community Mental Health Team is a team of mental health professionals who work to support people in the community who are struggling with their mental health and need extra support.

On referral to the Community Mental Health Team, the person's needs will be assessed and they will be provided with a key worker who will be their main point of contact. This is usually a Community Psychiatric Nurse. If your family member or friend is really struggling with day-to-day life then you could ask them to speak to their GP about a potential referral. It can take a bit of pressure off your shoulders if you know that your family member or friend is getting support from a mental health professional who is discussing relevant support services with them. As with preparing for an initial GP appointment, preparation and support can help here. The GP needs to know how things are on a daily basis for the person so they can form the opinion that a referral to the mental health team could help the situation.

9 Help your loved one stay connected

If your loved one is struggling with their mental health, don't wait for them to make the first move. Losing touch with people is a classic symptom of poor mental health. Sending a text, email or Facebook message is a good way to keep in touch day-to-day to keep up support without being intrusive, but usually people get significantly more personally and emotionally from a phone-call or face-to-face meeting – which are the things someone might avoid if they are feeling low.

Keep up the momentum by trying not to give up on making phonecalls, even if the person often doesn't answer. It might be helpful to agree a regular time that you will call each day or week so that the contact is expected. Consider getting friends or family together in a safe and welcoming environment if you think the person is struggling with meeting up with people face-to-face. And remember that in addition to talking on the phone you can get free video calls online through Skype if everyone has the right computer access. Seeing each other's faces can make a big difference and can remind someone who is struggling that they are loved and supported even if you are far away. Try to remember that being friends on Facebook might help you feel that you are keeping an eye on your loved ones – but it isn't the same as supporting them directly. Facebook can create a false sense of being 'in touch'. You might keep an eye on your loved one's Facebook profile to get an idea how they are doing, but they won't know this and they won't feel the benefit of that support.

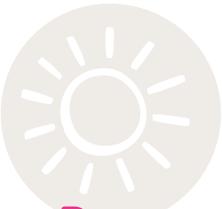
Remember that communicating and connecting socially can be one of the most challenging aspects of suffering from a mental health problem – and persevere as it is likely that things will improve over time.

Another way you can help the person stay connected is to help them explore local support options. Services will vary from area to area, but it's useful to remember that the things that help will not always be specifically for people with mental health issues. Exercise can help, as can reading focussed on wellbeing ('bibliotherapy'). For meeting new people, Meet Up groups exist in many towns in Scotland to bring together people with mutual interests. And befriending schemes are often available for those struggling with their mental health, as well as 'outreach' support where you are visited in your own home or in the local area, and day centres for those who need support in re-establishing a daily routine.

To learn more about what is available in your area, call the SAMH National Mental Health Information Service for some starting points.

10 Talk about stories of mental health recovery

Experiencing mental health problems can make it overwhelming and painful to look toward the future. Recovery from mental health problems is possible and likely, but often people are not aware of this and talking about it can give them hope. The Scottish Recovery Network's website has stories of recovery submitted by people who have lived with mental health problems. It can give some great pointers and fresh perspectives for both you and the person you support – www.scottishrecovery.net/Submitted-thoughts-and-stories/. The stories are real-life accounts of experiencing and moving on from mental health problems.



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11 Be suicide-aware

It's important to listen out carefully for any hints that your loved one is thinking about suicide. For some people suicidal thoughts are just that – thoughts and ideas which run through their mind at times with no direct intention of attempting suicide. For others there can be a deep sense of despair and loss which leads to contemplating suicide as something which they do intend to actively try. Suicidal thoughts are much more common than suicide attempts. If you have any concerns about whether your loved one is thinking about suicide – ask them directly.

If you are worried about asking then you can contact the SAMH Community Support Network team for support and information. SAMH also have several publications that you might find useful such as the 'Suicide...How to Ask?' card and 'Suicide...Do you know somebody who is thinking about taking their life?' Both of these are available on our website, along with information about our suicide prevention services and suicide prevention training.

For more information on suicide prevention, see www.samh.org.uk/our-work/national-programmes/suicide-prevention.

12 Give affirmation to your loved one – and look after yourself!

When you are struggling with your mental health it's good to be given some affirmation by those around you to help keep you moving forward. If you are frustrated and worried about the situation the person is in, this will not always be instinctive as you might be more focussed on wanting to help them sort out aspects of their life that need some attention. Consider what honest encouragement you can give.

"I think you can bounce back from this. You are still the same person we all know and love. Your sense of humour hasn't gone anywhere!"

"I think you are really brave for the way that you are dealing with this."

"You need to remember all the things you are good at – making friends and making people laugh for a start."

One of the most difficult things when you are supporting someone who is struggling with their mental health is to learn to listen to what can feel like the same story many times over. Try to listen out for small changes in how the person is feeling and keep your ears 'fresh' for listening. If you notice when small improvements are made and feed this back then you can share in these small steps to recovery together. But if the strain of supporting someone starts to get to you, then remember that all the same support is there for you to find out about and use – confidential helplines, GP support, counselling and online wellbeing programmes.

Be realistic with yourself about how much you can do to help – no one person can do everything that's needed to help someone recover from a mental health issue. Recovery is individual and personal, and no one person will be able to 'fix everything' for the person that is struggling.

If you find that you are spending a good deal of your time regularly looking after someone with mental health issues – then you may start to consider yourself to be a 'carer'. Being a carer brings with it certain rights and entitlements as well as a range of support options. For more information on support as a carer, check out www.carersuk.org/scotland.

While you are supporting your loved ones through mental health problems, and encouraging them to take pro-active steps towards wellbeing, be kind to yourself – remember that simply being there through the problems, ready and willing to listen and help where you can, will probably be deeply appreciated by your loved one. Someone who is struggling with their mental health may not be in the right place to say how much your support means to them at the time – but it is likely it will mean a huge amount to them and play a significant role in their recovery.



Try to listen out for small changes in how the person is feeling and keep your ears 'fresh' for listening.

Key Contacts and Resources

SAMH NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICE

For more information, call SAMH National Mental Health Information Service on 0800 917 34 66 or email info@samh.org.uk. The National Mental Health Information Service provides information and signposting around mental health and can provide information on both national and local resources.

NHS INFORM

www.nhsinform.co.uk/mentalhealth
Find information on mental health conditions produced by the NHS at the Mental Health Zone.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

www.rcpsych.ac.uk
Find information on mental health conditions produced in an easy to read format.

SEE ME

www.seemescotland.org
Find out about Scotland's mental health anti-stigma campaign.

SCOTTISH RECOVERY NETWORK

www.scottishrecovery.net/Submitted-thoughts-and-stories
Read stories of recovery from mental health issues for inspiration and ideas.

BREATHING SPACE

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
0800 83 85 87
A Scottish listening and information service – available every evening and throughout the weekend for anyone who needs to take time to talk about how they are feeling or what they are going through. The service is confidential, and provides a listening service, information and advice.

SAMARITANS

www.samaritans.org
08457 90 90 90 or email Jo@samaritans.org
Samaritans volunteers listen in confidence to anyone in any type of emotional distress, without judging or telling people what to do. They don't offer advice, but they encourage people who contact them to talk about their feelings and help them explore all the options they have. Open 24 hours.

ACTION ON DEPRESSION

www.actionondepression.org
A wide range of information and support for taking action on depression, including online cognitive behavioural therapy and local support groups.

STEPS FOR STRESS

www.stepsforstress.org
A simple guide to stressing less and enjoying life more. A good range of resources including videos.

MOODJUICE

www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk
Online self-help guides and quizzes to help people understand their current mental health situation better.

LIVING LIFE

www.nhs24.com/UsefulResources/LivingLife
0800 328 9655
This is an NHS telephone service providing telephone-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (a recognised technique for tackling issues like low self-esteem, depression and anxiety). CBT focuses on looking closely at your own thinking patterns to identify negative cycles of thought – and try to replace them with more positive thinking. Depending on the area you live in, you can either ask for a session of telephone CBT sessions over the phone, or for guided self-help which means you work through CBT resources independently with telephone support sessions. You can be referred by your GP or can self-refer by calling in to Living Life.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk
A website provided by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy providing accessible information on the benefits of talking therapy and what to expect when you arrange to speak to a counsellor. You can also search for private counsellors in the UK.

Improving Mental Wellbeing Online

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

www.lttf.com
This website features an online life-skills course based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. This is a recognised means of tackling issues like low self-esteem, depression and anxiety and focussing on looking closely to identify negative cycles of thought and try to replace them with more positive thinking. The service is free but there is a charge for some support materials.

MOODGYM

www.moodgym.anu.edu.au
A free self-help computer programme which teaches Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. This type of therapy is all about looking at your negative cycles of thought and thinking about how these contribute to how you are feeling, and how you can replace negative cycles of thought with more positive thinking. Includes a programme called e-couch for preventing and coping with certain common mental health conditions. This website is Australian, but is still useful to those living in Scotland.

BIG WHITE WALL

www.bigwhitewall.com
Big White Wall is a website providing a safe online environment for people to write down and express their feelings. This is free for some people, and others must pay a small subscription to use the service.

FACING US

www.facingus.org
There are a good range of different wellbeing activities on this varied website, including putting together a Wellness Plan (planning how to recover from a mental health issue); a Wellness Book (listing the things you know keep you mentally well), and a Wellness Tracker. This website is from the US, but is still useful for those living in Scotland.

Staying Connected

SKYPE www.skype.com

Speak to each other for free online with video – if you all have the right computer access.

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com

Set up a profile and link with family and friends to receive updates and share photographs

BE MINDFUL ONLINE

www.bemindfulonline.com
This allows you to learn about the practice of 'Mindfulness' online, for a one-off fee payment. Mindfulness is a mind-body approach to life that helps people relate differently to their experiences. It involves paying attention to thoughts, feelings and body sensations in a way that increases our ability to manage difficult experiences and make wise choices.

MOODSCOPE

www.moodscope.com
This website can help people track how they are feeling day to day by answering a set number of questions to get a mood score each day. Add short comments each day about how things are and what's contributing to your mood, and view a graph to see how your mood changes over time. A good tool for self-reflection. You can also share your results with trusted family members and friends.

MOODPANDA

<http://moodpanda.com>
This website provides an option of tracking your mood by mobile phone app.

MEET UP www.meetup.com

A site for connecting with people in your local area with similar interests – includes several towns and cities in Scotland.

If you need more information now or in the future, contact SAMH National Mental Health Information Service on 0800 917 34 66 or email us at info@samh.org.uk.

The service is confidential and provides information and signposting to help people in Scotland to access services and support in relation to their mental health.

SAMH also runs a network of mental health resource centres around Scotland. For more information, visit our website at www.samh.org.uk. If we do not run a Resource Centre in your area, the Information Service can point you in the direction of local services.



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