

# Talking about MENTAL HEALTH

Talking about mental health is important, but it isn't always easy. We hope these conversation tips and prompts will help you get your community talking.

**S**

## Situation

Try using a situation to find common ground - a recent, current or future event that means something to you both.

- > It's been hard not to see people in person, hasn't it?
- > I've been thinking about how much I am looking forward to (a community event, faith gathering), how about you?

**I**

## Initiate

Initiating a caring conversation is an act of kindness, good for your own wellbeing as well as for someone else. A direct question, asked gently, gets to the point and is an honest way to begin.

- > I know we haven't been able to meet physically and have a proper chat; I wanted to call and ask how you have been doing, how you have been managing with being at home/working/looking after your family?

**G**

## Guide

Being a good listener shows someone that you are genuinely interested in how they are doing. Use open-ended questions to guide them into talking more, without judgement or negative reactions to what they have to say.

- > You said that you missed (an activity, for example a singing group or a book club), how has that made you feel?
- > You mentioned money worries, how has that been affecting you?

**N**

## Nudge

A nudge in the right direction can help people to search for their own resolution. Positive encouragement and practical suggestions can be a helpful prompt.

- > Have you thought about what might help you to deal with your money worries?
- > What do you think you can do to make things better for yourself?

**SS**

## Support & Signpost

It can be hard to know where to turn and what help is available. You can use this opportunity to point someone in the right direction for support.

- > It has been great to talk about this, there is much more help available for you if you would like to speak with someone, from the NHS and from other local organisations. Here are a few options for you.



**Why not use SIGNSS to note down some of your own ideas for how to start, maintain and close a conversation about mental health?**

# SUPPORT & SIGNPOST

## What is mental health and where can I find help?



### What is mental health?

Mental health describes our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Throughout our life, it affects how we think, feel, and act, as well as how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Good mental health helps us to deal with life, with work and contribute to the world around us. Mental health problems are common, but help is available. People do get better and most recover completely.

### How can we improve our mental health?

Evidence suggests there are five ways to better mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life:

1. **Get active**
2. **Connect with others**
3. **Keep learning, including new life skills or hobbies**
4. **Be aware of yourself and the world (mindfulness)**
5. **Give to others**

### What are the most common mental health problems?

Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health problems in the UK and some people may experience more than one mental health problem at any given time. Signs of poor mental health may include low mood, problems sleeping, loss of interest and pleasure in things that were once enjoyable, tearfulness, being irritable, feeling tired most of the time, changes in appetite, and negative thoughts and feelings.

Everyone feels anxious at some point in their life, but some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives. How severe the symptoms are varies from person to person. These can include restlessness, a sense of dread, feeling constantly 'on edge', difficulty concentrating and irritability.



### Where can I find help?

Reaching out to someone we trust is one of the most important things we can do to keep mentally well.

#### There is also professional help available:

**Good Thinking:** London's digital mental wellbeing service, promoting proactive self-care for the four most common mental health conditions: anxiety, low mood, sleeping difficulties and stress.

> Find out more here: [www.good-thinking.uk](http://www.good-thinking.uk)

**Thrive LDN:** tools and resources to support Londoners' mental health, including resources on supporting emotional resilience, financial anxiety, bereavement, and also how to safely support others in the community.

> [www.thriveldn.co.uk](http://www.thriveldn.co.uk)

**NHS Talking Therapies:** a free NHS counselling service that helps with a range of low to moderate mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, bereavement and relationship problems. Talking Therapies is available in every borough in London and elsewhere across England.

> You can find details of your nearest service here: [www.nhs.uk/talk](http://www.nhs.uk/talk)

**Samaritans:** provide emotional support, advice and information to anyone who wants to talk, available 24 hours, every day.

> Call 116 123 or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**MECC Link:** provides information about a whole range of services including self-care and national and local support services.

> [www.mecclink.co.uk](http://www.mecclink.co.uk)