



# Talking about our Mental Health

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We should be talking about our mental health. Every single one of us has mental health, purely and simply because we're human beings, we have a mind and can experience emotion. In the same way that we all have a physical body and can notice changes in our physical health. There is a relatively new term called 'mental fitness' which can help us to equate looking after our mental health in the same way we would our physical health.

Often the biggest barrier to reaching out for support when we're not feeling ourselves is talking about how we feel. This often is down to the stigma that still unfortunately exists around mental health. Hopefully we're moving in the right direction and this stigma is reducing, but it is still there. The only way we're going to reduce the stigma is by having conversations. Talking about our mental health and how we feel. We are all human beings, with mental health, and the more we talk about it, the easier it becomes. By you talking about your mental health and how you feel, could allow the people around you, to feel comfortable enough to share how they feel, which could result in them reaching out for invaluable support. We want to create environments and cultures around us where it is okay if we're not feeling okay. It is alright if we're not feeling alright.

Talking about our feelings isn't a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength. It is a positive, proactive step, that we're taking to look after the health of our mind. Just talking about how we feel can help us to feel like we're supported and less alone. If we've been carrying a problem around with us in our mind, sharing this can help, or even hearing it out loud may help us to see solutions or options we hadn't thought of previously.

It may feel a little awkward or uncomfortable the first time we start to open up, but it will become easier. It doesn't have to feel formal, find a space, a time or a situation where you feel comfortable and tell someone what is going on for you right now, how you're feeling at the moment. It doesn't have to only be when we're struggling with how we're feeling either, if you're having a good day, or your feeling happy at the moment. Talk about this too. This will create an environment where it is safe and okay to talk about how we feel, no matter what we're experiencing.

It may be that talking to those closest to us, our colleagues, family or friends may not be something we want to do at this moment in time. It may be that talking to someone we don't know, may provide the most comfort and support. That's why there are so many free, helplines you can contact that provide the power of a listening ear. The Samaritans are a well known helpline that are available 24 hours a day on 116 123. If you find it difficult to verbally share how you are feeling some organisations offer webchat and text support too.

Talking therapies can be helpful, depending on your circumstance and situation to have a therapist or counsellor to listen, and help you find your own solutions without any judgement. You may be able to self-refer to your local NHS talking therapy service, known as IAPT. Your GP will also be able to support you in finding local services for support.

Why not start today, consciously make an effort to talk to someone about how you are feeling.