

# NO MORE MYTHS!

A FACT PACK jammed full of information about mental illness for children and young people who live with someone with mental ill health



Supported by:

# ***WHAT'S IN THIS BOOKLET?***

***Mental Health? What Does That Mean?***

***Depression***

***Anxiety***

***Eating Disorders***

***Psychosis***

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# MENTAL HEALTH? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

## MENTAL HEALTH VERSUS MENTAL ILL HEALTH

What is good mental health all about?!

- ★ having the ability to think about ourselves and the world around us in a way that is positive and which is acceptable to society.
- ★ being able to carry on with day-to-day activities like learning, managing our feelings, having good relationships and coping with challenges and changes.

What are mental health problems?

Just as we all have physical health, we also have mental health and just like our bodies can become unwell, so can our minds! Mental health problems can range from the worries that we all experience in everyday life to serious long-term conditions.

Mental ill health is so common; **1 in 4** people will have a mental health problem in their lifetime. You are likely to have someone in your family, someone at school or college, or see someone in your community who suffers from mental ill health.

Who knows someone with a mental health issue?



# DEPRESSION!!

## WHAT IS IT?

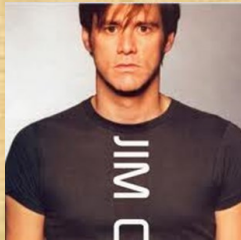
Although everyone feels 'down in the dumps' sometimes, depression is the name for a condition where these feelings of sadness are severe or long-lasting.

People of all ages, backgrounds, lifestyles and nationalities can experience depression.

Most people with depression can get on with their lives and many people learn a lot about themselves after they have been through a period of depression.



What do we all have in common??



## HOW DOES IT START?

Depression is a disorder, just like diabetes or high blood pressure.

There are lots of possible causes of depression; sometimes the cause of a person's depression can't be known because everyone is different. Some peoples' symptoms of depression come on suddenly and for no obvious reasons while other people develop depression after a crisis, stressful situation or other illness.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF SOMEONE I KNOW HAS DEPRESSION?

Someone with depression might:

- have feelings of overwhelming sadness. They might get into a cycle of feeling guilty, worthless or helpless. They might also feel anxious, tense, worried or irritable.
- lose interest in things they would usually enjoy. They might not be able to concentrate fully on tasks, to make decisions or remember things.
- have difficulty sleeping. They might not be able to fall asleep at night or may wake up early in the morning. This might make them feel very tired or lacking in energy; so much so that they might find it difficult to get out of bed during the day.
- they may lose their appetite, or eat more than usual; resulting in weight loss or gain.
- pay less attention to themselves; like forgetting to change their clothes or wash their hair.
- some people who have very severe depression might see or hear things that aren't there; this can be very confusing and difficult for the person.

HOW DO PEOPLE  
WITH DEPRESSION  
GET BETTER?

Depression is very  
treatable!

Each person might respond differently to different treatments. Some people take medication, others use talking therapies like counseling. The key to getting better is to find what works for that person, with the support of professionals.





# ANXIETY!!

Anxiety is something we can all experience sometimes. Most people will feel unsure, tense or sometimes scared at the thought of doing exams, starting at a new school or going to the doctors for an injection.

You might be worried about what will happen when you get there, whether you will do well at something or whether people will like you.

Worrying like this can sometimes stop you from sleeping, make you not want to eat anything or stop you from concentrating.

If these feelings become severe and long-lasting this can be called an anxiety disorder.

Imagine you're hiking in the woods and you come across a bear.

What's the first thing you would do? You might run away from the bear, or you might freeze and not know what to do. Another reaction is to yell and wave your arms to appear big and scary. There are three ways humans react to danger: fight,

flee, or freeze. When we are anxious, we react in one of these ways, too.

We may run away or avoid situations that make us anxious.

We may freeze, like when our minds go blank and we can't think clearly. Or we may fight, get angry and lash out at people.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF SOMEONE I KNOW HAS ANXIETY?

**Someone with an anxiety disorder might feel:**

- worried all the time.
- tired or unable to concentrate.
- irritable and have a short fuse.

**They might experience:**

- poor sleep patterns.
- sweating.
- heavy breathing.
- dizziness, diarrhea, sickness.

FIGHT or FLIGHT



## Genes

Some people are naturally anxious; it may be passed down in their family. However, even people who aren't naturally anxious can become anxious!

## Trauma

People who have experienced a traumatic event can sometimes feel the effects of anxiety for a long time afterwards.

## Psychology

Sometimes people with mild symptoms of anxiety mistake these for a serious physical illness which makes them more anxious and it begins a big cycle!

## Physical problems

Some physical problems, like thyroid disease, can make you feel anxious.

## HOW DOES IT START?

## Drugs

Street drugs, prescription drugs or even coffee can make some people feel uncomfortably anxious.

## Other mental health problems

Other mental health problems can make you anxious; about half of people with depression get panic attacks at some point.

**EVERY PERSON IS DIFFERENT! SOME, ALL OR NONE OF THESE FACTORS MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THEIR ANXIETY!**



## WHAT MIGHT HELP A PERSON WITH ANXIETY TO FEEL BETTER?

**Each person's route to recovery will be different.**

- ★ Talking about the problems they are experiencing to friends, family or professionals can help to ease anxiety.
- ★ Learning ways to relax body and mind can help some people to control their anxiety; these techniques can be learnt from books, videos, audiotapes or through professional advice.
- ★ In some cases, medication is needed to help the person feel better. It is important for the person to get help from a professional if they feel they need medication.



# EATING DISORDERS!!

Eating disorders are conditions which result in people using food to help them cope with stress or difficult situations. They might begin to use food as a way of staying in control of their lives and emotions. Having an eating disorder can result in a person making unrealistic decisions about **what** they eat and **how much** they eat.

## ANOREXIA NERVOSA

- ★ You might notice someone losing weight or not eating. People with anorexia are usually at least 15% below their recommended body weight. They often feel fat, even when they are very thin.
- ★ They might have an extreme fear of gaining weight; they feel fat, even though they have lost so much weight that it becomes obvious to others.
- ★ They can become so preoccupied with food and have such distorted ideas about their weight and shape, that it can become very difficult to accept the need for a proper, healthy diet.
- ★ You may notice that they remain fascinated with food and enjoy cooking for others.
- ★ They might try to hide food, or come up with complicated plans to avoid food and appear heavier than they are. They might pretend to have eaten when they haven't and may use other methods such as excessive exercise or laxatives to lose more weight.

## BULIMIA NERVOSA

- ★ Binge and purge behaviour: people with bulimia might eat huge amounts of food in one go (binge) and then use tablets called laxatives or make themselves sick to get rid of it (purge).
- ★ They may not look overweight or underweight; which can make bulimia difficult to detect. They often have difficulty in controlling their eating; sometimes following strict diets, othertimes bingeing on foods which are high in fat, carbohydrates and calories. The need to purge can come from the feelings of guilt and shame following a binge.
- ★ Continuous bingeing and purging can cause serious harm to a person's body; for example; if a person is regularly being sick it can damage their teeth and result in dehydration.

Anorexia and bulimia are the two most common types of eating disorder. You might have heard of some others; binge eating disorder, compulsive overeating or EDNOS (eating disorder not otherwise specified). Info about these can be found on the B-eat website (see resources page).



If eating disorders are not detected, they can cause serious health problems. We need the nutrients and energy we get from food to stay healthy and to function properly.

Just SOME of the health risks include:

Higher risk of heart failure

Fainting

Muscle loss/weakness

Tooth decay (vomiting)

Loss of bone density

Hair loss



Over 1.6 million people (both men and women) are affected by eating disorders in the UK. They can be of any age, race and background.

For information on how to eat healthily and keep your body happy have a look online on the Young Minds 'Eat well, feel better' page.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

### HOW DO PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS GET BETTER?

Treatment for eating disorders usually involves balancing two parts:

1. **Psychological treatment** such as counselling or psychotherapy
2. Treatment and attention to the **medical and nutritional needs** of the person

Each person's recovery is different and eating disorders range in how severe they are so treatment should be made to fit each person's needs. Although in some cases it might take a long time, treatment is out there and **RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE!**

# PSYCHOSIS!!

## WHAT IS IT?

Psychosis is a mental health problem where a person experiences changes in their thinking, views, mood and behaviour which can cause severe disruption to their life.

The word psychosis can make some people feel scared or uncomfortable; often because of what they read in the newspaper or hear on the TV about people with a psychotic illness. The media often report that people with a mental illness are violent or dangerous.

The truth is that often people who are experiencing a psychotic episode will withdraw from the people around them. While the symptoms of psychosis can make people act in a way that is unpredictable they are rarely aggressive or violent.



BIPOLAR DISORDER

PSYCHOTIC DEPRESSION

DRUG-INDUCED PSYCHOSIS

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Examples of psychotic disorders:  
have you heard of any of these?

# HOW CAN I TELL IF SOMEONE I KNOW HAS A PSYCHOTIC ILLNESS?



## Delusions; false beliefs

Beliefs of persecution, of guilt, of having a special mission, of being under outside control, of grandeur.



## Hallucinations; false perceptions

Hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting or smelling things which aren't there but feel very real to the person experiencing them.

## Thinking difficulties

May be difficulties in concentration, memory, ability to plan. Sometimes called cognitive impairments.



## WHAT HELPS A PERSON WITH A PSYCHOTIC ILLNESS FEEL BETTER?

Some options for treatment for psychosis are:

- ★ **Early Intervention Teams:** a group of healthcare professionals who support people who have experienced psychosis for the first time
- ★ **Medication**
- ★ **Psychotherapy** such as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
- ★ **Self-help techniques or groups:** sometimes spending time with others who have had similar experiences can help



# PERSONALITY DISORDERS!!

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Our 'personality' is made up by the way that we think, feel and behave and it's what makes us all different. Our personality helps us to get on with other people and to make friends and have relationships. People who have personality disorders might find that parts of their personality make it difficult for them to be around other people, or to be happy with themselves. It might be hard for them to keep out of trouble and to control their feelings and behaviour.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF PD?

Someone with a personality disorder might:

- think other people are lying to them or trying to hurt them.
- feel they can't trust people (at work, at home, friends, etc.)
- not be interested in forming relationships; preferring to be alone.
- not be able to experience pleasure or joy.
- believe in special powers like reading other people's minds.
- speak in an unusual way; for example, in long rambling sentences.
- look down on other people.
- not seem to experience emotions.



The above are just **SOME** of many signs and symptoms of personality disorders. For more information go to [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and type personality disorder into the search bar.

## HOW DO PERSONALITY DISORDERS START?

Because some parts of our personality are inherited from our parents, **genes** can play a part in causing P.D.

**Repeated traumatic experiences** such as the sudden death of a loved one or being in an accident might lead to P.D.

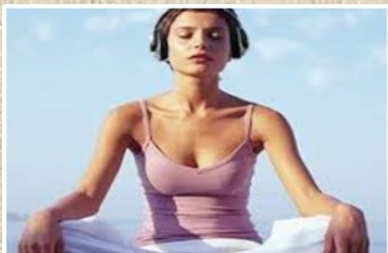
**Family circumstances** such as a difficult childhood can make people vulnerable to P.D.

Personality disorders can be very complex and difficult to understand. There is a lot of information online to help with this. If you would like to read more about the types of P.D., the causes, the treatments and the experiences of people who have P.D.

Have a look at the resources page in this booklet for more information on where to look!

## WHAT CAN HELP PEOPLE WITH P.D. FEEL BETTER?

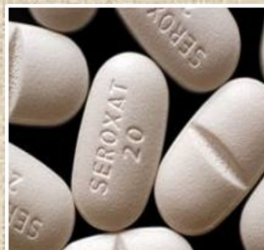
### Self-help techniques



### Talking therapies



### Medications





# WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP OTHERS?



- ★ **Listen to them** and try to understand what they are going through without judging them.
- ★ **Reassure them** that what they are feeling is ok and that talking about it is a really good step towards feeling better.
- ★ Support them to get **professional help**; this might be from their GP, support worker, counsellor, psychiatrist or other professional who is already involved in their care.



- ★ Encourage them to think about what has helped them to **relax** in the past; even something small like going for a walk with a loved one can really help if someone is feeling sad or distressed.
- ★ If you live with someone with mental ill health you probably know more about them than anyone else; don't be afraid to speak up and **give your side of the story** to professionals! If you need some help to do this, ask an adult you trust.
- ★ Remember that although family support is really important for those who have mental ill health, it is the **adults who are involved that are responsible for their treatment, NOT YOU!**



# WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

- ★ **Be open** about how you're feeling! Talk to someone in your family, a teacher, a support worker or a friend. A worry shared is a worry halved!
- ★ If you think you need support around caring for someone or around your own mental health speak to an adult you trust; they can help you get the **support** you need to stay strong, confident and happy.

- ★ **Get involved** in the things you love; activities with friends, sports, etc. Having fun and feeling good about yourself is important for everyone!



- ★ If someone is experiencing mental ill health it is important for you to remember that it is **NOT YOUR FAULT**.. but neither is it theirs.

- ★ **Remember: many people have problems**; all problems can be discussed and most problems can be solved, or at least managed!

- ★ **Ask questions!**

- ★ **Know your rights** as a young carer. You have the right to an assessment, to make choices about the amount of care you give and to be given information about the illness. For more info talk to someone at the YCP about your rights!



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q. Can you catch mental illness? Is it contagious?**

**A.** You cannot 'catch' mental illness, like you might catch a cold. Just because your mum/dad has it doesn't mean you will get it.

**Q. What should I do if I'm feeling scared/worried about someone with a mental health problem?**

**A.** If you feel like you, or the person who has a mental illness, are at risk you should phone 999 and ask for an ambulance and/or the police to come and help you. If it is not an emergency but you are worried, speak to an adult you trust; this might be a teacher, a support worker or someone involved in your parent's care.

**Q. Is it my fault that my parent has this problem?**

**A.** Mental illness isn't anybody's fault and it is not your responsibility to make it go away either.

**Q. Why is this happening to my family?**

**A.** Doctors aren't sure why people get mental illness, but you aren't alone! Many families (1 in 4) have someone with a mental illness and they manage to cope and stay together. Some children might be too scared or embarrassed to talk about it but there are others out there!

**Q. Will things stay like this?**

**A.** Most people with a mental illness are trying hard to get help to feel better. Medication and other treatments can help things to change.

**Q. Does dad still love me?**

**A.** Your dad might be acting strange or scary or distant because he is unwell; not because he doesn't love you.

# WHO'S WHO AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

**GP:** This is your **family doctor**. He/she will try to find out what the problem is and how it can be treated. The GP might write a prescription for medication or may make a 'referral' to another place; e.g. the CMHT.

**Community Mental Health Team (CMHT):** This is a **team of people** which might include social workers, psychiatrist, occupational therapists, mental health nurses and support workers. All these professionals work together in a team to develop a '**care plan**' which is used to help the person who is ill to feel better.

**Psychiatrist:** A psychiatrist is a **trained doctor** who specialises in the treatment of mental health problems. They work out what the problem is and what treatment is needed. They can also prescribe medication.

**Psychologist:** A professional who studies the mind and behaviour. Psychologists cannot prescribe medication and have a less medical viewpoint.

**Mental Health Nurse:** This is a nurse who has **specialist training** in mental health. They might visit someone at home to talk through any problems and to **give support or advice**. They also keep an eye on the person's treatment.

**Occupational Therapist (OT):** An OT helps a person to **regain their interests and skills** and to **build up their confidence**. This might help to get a person back to work or to gain new hobbies.

**Social Worker:** This is a professional who gives **advice** to people that are experiencing problems in their lives and helps them to get the **services** they need. This could be things like counselling, money for breaks, information on local organisations, etc.

**Care Co-ordinator:** If several people are involved in looking after and providing treatment for someone with a mental illness, a care co-ordinator might take responsibility for **making sure everyone works as a team**. The care co-ordinator must check how carers in the family are coping and include them in the **care plan** (this includes young carers!)

**Crisis Team:** This is a specialist team that helps the person and their family at times of **crisis**. They might provide extra support to the family to keep people at home instead of being admitted to hospital.

# RESOURCES AND SUPPORT



If you would like more information about mental health and mental ill health there are some fantastic websites and other resources available:

## CHILDLINE

**0800 1111** Free 24 hour advice line

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Call, text, chat online or email a question about any worries you might have; nothing is too big or too small!

## YOUNG MINDS

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Loads of information about young peoples' wellbeing and mental health.

## MIND

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Click on the 'information' button for loads of info about different mental health issues and about how to cope if someone you care for has mental ill health.

## NHS DIRECT

**0845 46 47** 24 hour advice from trained nurses

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

Advice on health matters (including mental ill health) and on where to call if you need help.

## YCNET

[www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)

Advice from youth workers, an online chat room for young carers, a discussion board and loads of other info.



## **B-EAT**

[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

B-eat provides info about eating disorders and online support and helplines for people with eating disorders.

## **SANE**

[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

A mental health charity which provides info and support to anyone affected by mental illness.

## **TIME TO CHANGE**

[www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk)

A campaign which is working to end the discrimination around mental ill health; full of info and resources for you to have a look at.

## Other resources:

**'I had a black dog, his name was depression' on YouTube.**  
Have a look at this fantastic animated story about a dog called depression. The story is also available as a book.

### **The Wise Mouse by Virginia Ironside**

A story for 5-11 year olds about a little girl whose mother is experiencing mental illness.

### **The Illustrated Mum by Jacqueline Wilson**

A story about a girl named Dolphin whose mum is struggling to cope with her depression.



# THE YOUNG CARERS' PROJECT

The Young Carers' Project supports children and young people aged 5-18 in Kingston. What sets the children we support apart from others is that they have extra responsibilities at home. They might care for someone with a physical disability, a learning disability, a mental health issue, drug or alcohol issues or a sensory impairment.

Part of the YCP is a project called the **Parental Mental Health Project**. This project is all about supporting children and young people who care for someone who has a mental health problem. We offer:

**1:1 support:** having someone you can trust to talk to

**Peer support activities:** meeting other young carers who have similar experiences (if you would like to!)

**Education:** learning about mental health issues

**Advocacy:** having someone to help you to get your point across

**Individual advice and information**

If you would like more information about anything you've seen in this booklet, or if you need information about something that you can't find in here, please give us a call or email us. We are here for YOU!

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