Mental Health UK
How does it really feel?
On the inside

Don't just put a brave face on

Mental health problems are more common than you might think. One in four of us will be affected at some time, but despite this, it's still a scary or little-known subject.

Mental Health UK

We challenge the causes of poor mental health and provide people with the tools they need to live their best possible life at home, school and work.

In a rapidly changing world, we bring together the heritage and experience of four charities from across the country who've been supporting people with their mental health for over 50 years.

What really happens on the inside?

This guide can help everyone get the information and support they need. It talks about the most common conditions, but there are many others. Some people will also experience more than one.

You'll also find advice on:

- Seeing your GP if you're worried about your mental health
- What to do if someone you know is affected
- How you can help yourself
- Who to contact for more advice

We bring together four national UK charities

You'll find their contact details at the end of this guide.

- Rethink Mental Illness in England
- Change Mental Health in Scotland
- Adferiad in Wales
- MindWise in Northern Ireland

Find out more at mentalhealth-uk.org

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It might be hard to see the signs

If a relative, friend or someone else you know has a mental health problem, they may tell you. But if they don't, any of these signs could suggest something's wrong:

- Anxious or irritable
- Mood swings
- Seeming withdrawn
- Self-harming
- Saying or doing unusual things
- Struggling to cope with work or studies
- Problems with concentration or memory

What you can do

Encourage them to talk to their GP, and show your support by telling them:

- You want to listen
- All GPs have mental health training and can help
- You can go with them
- Their GP won't share any information without permission
- Most mental health problems can be treated

What if they don't want help?

No-one can be forced to get help, but you can contact their GP for them. Talk with their GP about their symptoms and behaviour, then the GP will decide if they need to take action.

If you think they're a serious risk to themselves or others, the NHS and social services may get involved.

- England and Scotland: Call NHS Direct or NHS 24 on **111**
- Wales: Call NHS Direct Wales on **111**
- Northern Ireland: Call the person's GP or local social services. Or the Emergency Social Work Service on **028 9504 9999** out of hours

If you think the person is an immediate risk to themselves or others, call 999

Depression

1 in 6 people will be diagnosed in the UK

SEE THE SIGNS

Here are the most common symptoms. You may have some and not others, but any of them can be part of the experience of depression.

- Feeling sad or irritable
- Feeling less able to do things
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Becoming tired easily, losing concentration
- Sleeping and eating less or more
- Low self-esteem, feeling guilty or worthless
- Losing interest in sex
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

TREATMENT

Self-help methods enable many people to overcome or manage low moods. The 'See how you can help yourself' section on page 19 will give you some pointers.

There are many talking therapy options too, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), group therapy or counselling. You may also be offered antidepressant medication.

If you have any symptoms described on this page, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

FACT

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide.

Rob wishes he could *run away* from his thoughts

Depression is a low mood disorder. We all feel down at times, but if these feelings last and get in the way of your life, you could have depression.

Stress

SEE THE SIGNS

Here are some of the common symptoms:

- Irritability
- Racing or obsessive thoughts
- Being forgetful, not concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sweating and dizziness
- Headaches or muscle pain
- Bowel or bladder problems
- Dry mouth, shortness of breath
- Fast heartbeat

TREATMENT

There are lots of ways to help yourself, including exercise, meditation or stress management courses. Take a look at the 'See how you can help yourself' section on page 19 for more ideas.

But if you still find it hard to cope, your GP can offer advice, along with access to talking therapy and medication.

If you have any symptoms described on this page and they are causing you long-term problems, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

FACT

Alcohol doesn't reduce stress, it actually stimulates release of the stress hormone cortisol.

Fiona feels like the world is on her shoulders

Stress makes you feel like you're under too much mental or emotional pressure. It affects us all, but if you're under stress for long periods, it can damage your mental health.

There are many causes, such as money and relationship problems, being unemployed, physical illness or going through a big life event – such as moving house.

Anxiety Disorders

affect 1 in 10 of us in the UK

SEE THE SIGNS

There are different types of anxiety - including panic attacks, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. But here are some common symptoms for them all:

- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of dread
- Irritability
- Sleep and appetite problems
- Fast breathing and heartbeat
- Hot flushes or blushing
- Dry mouth
- Shaking
- Extreme tiredness or lack of energy
- Dizziness and fainting
- Stomach aches and sickness

TREATMENT

Many people use self-help methods, which you can find out more about on page 19.

Talking therapy can really help too, either one-to-one or in a group. You can also tackle anxiety with medication, and both of these options are available on the NHS.

If you have any symptoms described on this page, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

It's a constant struggle for Thea to stay STRONG

Anxiety means feeling worried, fearful or nervous. It's natural to be anxious - but if the feelings don't go away, get worse or have no particular cause, they can become a problem.

FACT

Exercise is a great way to improve your mental wellbeing and manage anxiety symptoms.

Bipolar Disorder

SEE THE SIGNS

Bipolar can make your mood change dramatically – from feeling very depressed, to being over-active (also called mania).

The symptoms of depression can include:

- Feeling sad or irritable
- Lack of energy or interest in life
- Sleeping and eating less or more
- Low self-esteem
- Losing interest in sex
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

The symptoms of mania can include:

- Feeling energetic or restless
- Irritability
- Talking quickly
- Making impulsive decisions
- Being sexually promiscuous
- Being argumentative or aggressive

TREATMENT

You can be prescribed antidepressants or mood stabilisers. You might also benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy, or psycho-education to help you learn about managing the symptoms.

If you have any symptoms described on this page, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

FACT

Bipolar disorder is more than just normal mood swings. It can cause extreme, often distressing, changes in mood.

Emma feels people don't see the real her

Bipolar disorder can be severe, affecting all aspects of life. Each mood can last a short time, or for weeks and months.

Psychosis & Schizophrenia

SEE THE SIGNS

People with psychosis can lose touch with reality, showing symptoms that include:

- Hallucinations: Seeing things and hearing voices that aren't real
- Delusions: Believing things that aren't true, like imagining you're being followed
- Disturbing and confusing thoughts
- Not realising something is wrong

People with schizophrenia also experience these symptoms, along with others such as:

- Lack of motivation and interest
- Slow movement
- Sleep disruption
- Low sex drive
- Less interest in socialising

TREATMENT

Schizophrenia and psychosis can be life-long conditions, but you can manage your symptoms and live a full life. Some people even find that their symptoms disappear completely. They can be treated by anti-psychotic drugs and cognitive behavioural therapy, along with psycho-education and family therapy. A specialist mental health team can provide additional support.

If you have any symptoms described on this page, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

Psychosis can lead to disturbing thoughts, or hearing and seeing things that aren't there. Schizophrenia also severely affects the way you think – but it does not mean having a split personality.

There are no clear causes, but family issues, drug and alcohol abuse, genes and stress are all thought to play a part.

FACT

People with schizophrenia are far more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.

Personality Disorders

SEE THE SIGNS

There are many types of the condition, but the most common is borderline personality disorder. Here are the main symptoms:

- Highly changeable mood
- Extreme reactions to feeling abandoned
- Unstable relationships
- Confused feelings about who you are
- Being impulsive and reckless
- Self-harming, suicidal threats or behaviour
- Anger
- Paranoid thoughts

TREATMENT

There are many kinds of therapy – mostly long term – to help you recognise the causes, manage the symptoms and control your emotions and behaviour. There's no recommended medication, but your GP may prescribe something to deal with symptoms such as anxiety or depression.

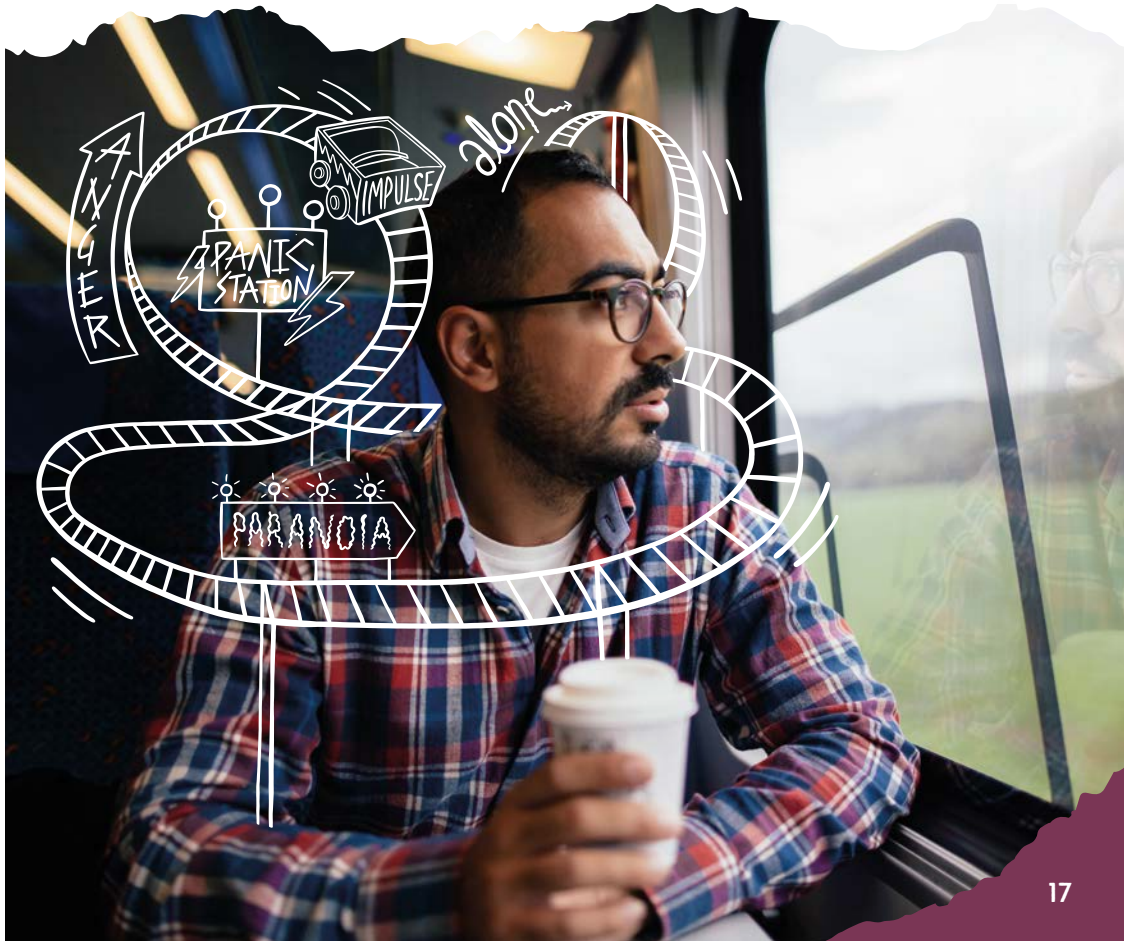
If you have any symptoms described on this page, it's a good idea to talk to your GP.

FACT

You can have a personality disorder alongside other mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.

Rav's journey was always up and down

A personality disorder can make you feel, think and behave differently to most people. And when your feelings are irrational and distressing, it can be become a serious problem.



Worried about your mental health?

See your GP

You might find it hard to talk about how you feel, but every GP has mental health training. They're ready to offer the right support.

What will happen?

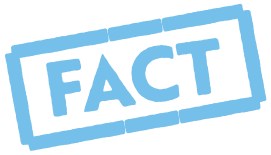
Your GP might prescribe medication, offer talking therapy or suggest lifestyle changes. They can also refer you to a specialist team if they think you're affected by a more serious condition.

Make the most of your visit

- See if there is a GP in the practice with a mental health interest
- Ask for a double appointment if you think you'll need more time
- Write down your feelings and symptoms
- Write down any questions
- Take someone you trust with you

You have the right to see any GP in the practice

If you're away from home and need to see a GP, you can get emergency treatment or register as a temporary resident with one nearby.



1 in 3 GP appointments relate to mental health issues.

See how you can help yourself

There is always treatment and support available from the NHS. But you also have the power to help yourself.

Talk about it

Being open about your mental health may seem scary, but a friend or relative should be happy to listen.

You can also call a support line to talk to a skilled listener, or meet other people at a support group who have similar issues and will understand.

Other things you can do

- Exercise or get outdoors, even if it's just for a walk
- Breathing exercises
- Learning ways to relax, such as meditation
- Yoga
- Eating healthy foods regularly
- Follow a daily routine to give your life more structure
- Get enough sleep
- Keep a mood diary to be more aware of your symptoms
- Do something creative like writing, art or music
- Meet people at a local club or society
- Volunteering

Looking for more information?

We hope this guide has helped you understand more about the most common mental health conditions – and what you can do to get help.

If you need more information and advice, visit us online at mentalhealth-uk.org

Charities that can help

Mental Health UK brings together four national mental health charities working across the UK, who can offer more information and support.

In England

Rethink Mental Illness

rethink.org

Call: **0808 801 0525**

(Monday - Friday 9.30am - 4.00pm, excluding bank holidays)

Email: **advice@rethink.org**

In Scotland

Change Mental Health Scotland

changemh.org

Call: **0808 8010 515**

(Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm, excluding bank holidays)

Email: **advice@changemh.org**

In Wales

Adferiad

adferiad.org

Call: **01492 863000**

(Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm, excluding bank holidays)

Email: **info@adferiad.org**

In Northern Ireland

MindWise

mindwisenv.org

Call: **02890 402323**

(Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm, excluding bank holidays)

Email: **info@mindwisenv.org**

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