

Topic 4: Mental health fact sheet

Stress

Stress is a normal reaction to the pressures of everyday life. Most people feel stress sometimes and it can even motivate us to do the things we need to. However, stress can sometimes be hard to manage depending on our circumstances. It's not always easy to recognise when stress is the reason we're feeling or acting differently.

Prejudice

Stress can cause mental health problems, and make existing problems worse. For example, if you often struggle to manage feelings of stress, you might develop a mental health problem like anxiety or depression.

Although poor mental health is very common, one of the biggest issues for those experiencing mental distress is prejudice.

Many people would react to these facts differently if they related to a physical illness.

Feelings of stress are normally triggered by things happening in your life which involve:

- being under lots of pressure
- facing big changes
- worrying about something
- not having much or any control over the outcome of a situation
- having responsibilities that you're finding overwhelming
- not having enough work, activities or change in your life
- times of uncertainty.

Source: mind.org.uk



Prejudice (continued)

But all kinds of health are equally important. Whether you are experiencing mental or physical problems, you should always ask for help.

Prejudice is judging someone without knowing them, for example, assuming someone with a mental illness is crazy or violent.

Maintaining good mental health

Staying emotionally fit is no different to staying physically fit. It is equally important to look after your mental health, as it is your physical health.

There are many things you can do to help maintain good mental health. Here are five factors that have been identified:

1. Relax and reduce stress
2. Find ways to learn and be creative
3. Spend time in nature
4. Connect with others
5. Get enough sleep and exercise

Getting help

If you ever find it challenging to maintain good mental health, it's important to talk to someone you trust or get advice from a helpline or organisation.

There are many websites that can provide useful advice, for example:

- **NHS website ([nhs.uk/live-well](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well))** provides lots of useful advice for dealing with common problems young people face
- **ChildLine ([childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk))** is an email, text and telephone helpline. There is lots of useful information on their website, or you can speak to a counsellor for advice
- **Mind ([mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk))** is a charity that helps to promote and protect good mental health for everyone. Their website contains lots of useful information and they also offer helplines and local services for those needing help.



Expert help

There are many healthcare professionals that help young people to deal with mental health problems.

Here are typical days in the lives of two experts.

A day as a counselling psychologist

This morning I'm working at a GP surgery, providing therapy sessions for patients with a wide variety of emotional and mental health problems.

I begin at 9.00am, talking with a teenage girl who's recently suffered a bereavement, and consequently developed a minor phobia of confined spaces. Together, we consider her life in a broader sense, including previous life experiences and general health. I encourage her to discuss her emotional state, and suggest possible behaviours she could practice to manage her distress and potentially overcome her phobia.

She leaves feeling happier and more able to cope with life, and we arrange another meeting to monitor her progress.

After seeing several more patients, I finish at 5.00pm. I find my work very rewarding.

A day in the life of a dramatherapist

I'm based at my local clinic – and start work at 9.00am.

My first patient is a twelve year old boy who has become addicted to sniffing glue following his parents' divorce. He has a history of being bullied because of speech and language difficulties and cannot express himself with words.

I help him make puppets based on characters from his favourite stories and encourage him to make sounds to express his feelings through the puppets. I'm able to reassure him that there are people who can care for him.

Next I drive to the community centre, where I work with a small group of older people with early stages of dementia who are finding it frustrating to express themselves. I help them by working through some stories of when they were growing up. I use various props from the past as part of the session.

My days are always varied and I love working with different groups of people.

Do these jobs sound appealing? If so, the Step into the NHS website provides more information about these and many other careers in the health sector. Visit stepintothens.nhs.uk/careers