A Bolder Healthier Winter
Mental Health

Birmingham Public Health 2023

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A Bolder Healthier Winter

A series of practical resources to enable professionals and community leaders with **direct reach to communities** and an established, trusted relationship **to support their communities** to improve overall health and wellbeing.

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What do we mean by mental health?

- Everybody has mental health and it's important that we take care of it, just like our physical health.
- Our mental health affects how we think, feel and act in our daily lives.
- Our mental health can go through periods of ups and downs.

Poor Mental Health

Can make it difficult to cope with our daily lives and feel just as bad as physical illness

↓

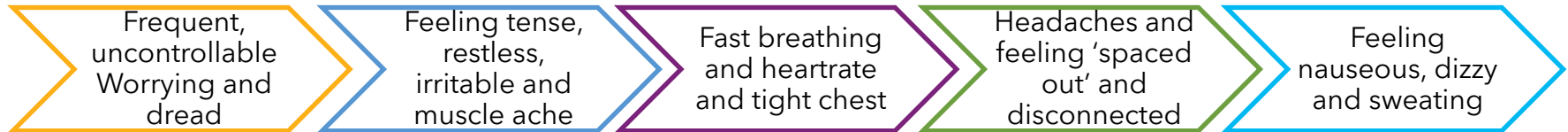Mental health problems affect around 1 in 4 people per year

↓

Can include anxiety, depression, and experiences of psychosis

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What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried or afraid about a situation.
- It's our bodies' natural response to things we perceive as dangerous and threatening.
- If these feelings are disproportionate to the situation, are very strong, regular and hard to control, then this can be an anxiety disorder.

Symptoms of Anxiety

| Frequent, uncontrollable Worrying and dread | Feeling tense, restless, irritable and muscle ache | Fast breathing and heartrate and tight chest | Headaches and feeling 'spaced out' and disconnected | Feeling nauseous, dizzy and sweating |

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What is Depression?

When I was younger I described it as feeling as though I had been run over by a bus – not that it was painful, but that it was this huge weight on top of me that I couldn't move. People were always saying I should "do this" or "try that" but they couldn't understand that I was pinned under it and couldn't get out.

I feel low and am easily upset. I feel tired and lethargic. I feel even more sensitive than usual

Anything that was said to me, I managed to turn into a bad thing. I was literally my own worst enemy.

I wanted everyone to know how I felt but I didn't dare tell them

Depression feels like a weight on my chest, which brings me down everywhere I go

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Loneliness

- Loneliness has worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic and can be particularly difficult during the winter months. 7.2% of people in a 2021 study felt lonely all or most of the time.

- Loneliness can be a serious problem – even as serious to our health as obesity and smoking.

- Risk of loneliness increases for people experiencing bereavement, unemployment, low income, discrimination, chronic illness

Are you feeling lonely?

- Birmingham Mind's directory helps to find peer support groups where you live such as Birmingham Mind

- Age UK offer a telephone befriending service

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Bereavement

- Covid-19 has led to a disproportionate amount of bereavement.

- Grieving can be emotionally overwhelming and impact our mental health.

National Services:

- Cruse Bereavement Support

- Good Grief Trust

- At a Loss

Local Services:

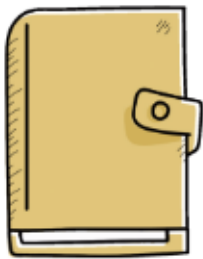- Beyond the Horizon

- Cruse Birmingham**:** 0121 687 8010

Bereavement Support

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Looking after the mental health of yourself and others

Plan for difficult times

Keep a diary

Relax

Try peer support

Take care of your physical health

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Practicing Journaling and Planning Ahead

- Regularly [keeping a diary](#) about our thoughts and feelings can improve our mental health and help us to:

| Vent and unload when we are overwhelmed | → | Express and regulate our emotions | → | Process Life Challenges |
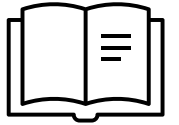
- We can plan ahead for challenges we might face in the future ensuring we make time to relax and look after our mental wellbeing

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The Importance of Talking and Peer Support

- The more we talk about mental health the easier it is for people to reach out for help.
- It can be hard to know how to help someone but there are lots of options for support:

• Your local GP can refer you to relevant services • Your workplace is responsible for providing work-related mental health support and training	• A useful way to discuss life challenges, socialise and do wellbeing activities with people with similar experiences. • TAWS offer lots of local peer support groups	• SACMHF- Black African & Caribbean support • Birmingham LGBT - peer support and counselling • Amman walk-in service: support in South Asian languages
GP and Workplace	**Peer Support Groups**	**Culturally-Sensitive support**

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Relaxation, Meditation, Mindfulness and Prayer

- **Benefits of Mindfulness**

Improved mood and life satisfaction

Improved memory and focus

Improved sleep

Increased mental resilience

Effective pain relief

Coping with addiction

- Try something that you find relaxing or learn some new relaxation techniques.
- Mindfulness is for anyone, anywhere, anytime.
- Let's have a go right now:

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Taking Care of your Physical Health

- The average adult should get between **75 to 150 minutes** of exercise a week

- This does not have to be sport or the gym. There are lots of [things you can do to keep physically active](#).

- Going out for a short walk in nature, especially with a friend can have huge benefits for your mental health.

- They run free, accessible peer support groups and activities across Birmingham including:
  - Walk and Talk sessions
  - Cycling groups
  - Gardening groups
- Visit TAWS website for more info

The Active Wellbeing Society

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Social media and Mental Wellbeing

- People who use over two hours of social media a day are more likely to report poor mental health.

- Use of social media is closely linked to anxiety disorders, low self-esteem and feeling self-conscious.

- Our feeds can often show us content that make us angry, sad or afraid

#OwnYourFeed Social Media Tips

Unfollow or Mute Accounts

Delete Social media Apps

Limit your time online

Think before you post

The Emoji Scale

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What to do in a crisis

- If urgent mental health help is needed you can ring the Birmingham Mind Helpline at **01212623555** or Birmingham and Solihull Urgent Mental Health Helpline at **08009159292** for advice and support.

- These lines are **available 24 hours, 7 days a week** and can be used whether you are known to our services or not.

- You can also email help@birminghammind.org or get in contact the webchat service [Helpline - Birmingham Mind](#)

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Helplines

You can find links to these mental health services and a broad range of others at [Birmingham City Council's bolder healthier winter page](#)

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