



**TURNING
POINT**
inspired by possibility



Mental health and wellbeing



Booklet 2

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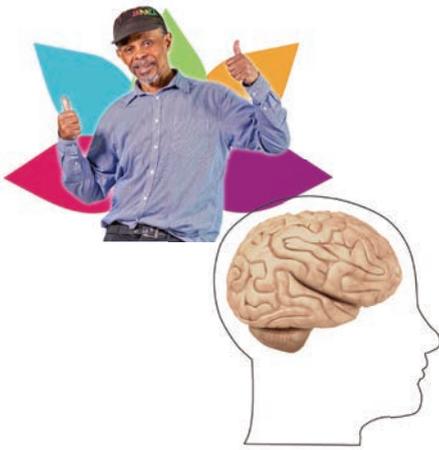
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Mental health and feeling well



Just like you look after your body, you also have to look after your **mental health**.

Mental health is how you feel in your mind and how you cope with everyday life.



Your mental health can change during your life.



Different things can affect your mental health. Things like:

- big changes in your life

or



- losing someone you love



If you have bad mental health, you might find it hard to deal with your thoughts.



You might feel sad, angry and not able to cope with everyday things.

Looking after your mental health



Having good mental health is feeling good about yourself and keeping yourself well.



There are lots of things you can do to look after your mental health.



Things like:

- having a good **diet**. A **diet** is the things you eat and drink



- getting lots of exercise



- getting enough sleep



- finding out what keeps you happy and well, and what makes you feel bad



- getting the right support when you need it. This will help to stop your mental health getting worse

People with a learning disability and mental health



Lots of people with a learning disability have problems with their mental health.

They might find it hard to cope with big changes in their life.



The person might start to behave and act in a different way to normal.



They might not understand what is happening. They might not be able to cope with their thoughts.

Understanding mental health in people with a learning disability



Sometimes, people can't tell if someone with a learning disability has a mental health problem.

Often, staff just think it is part of their disability.



This can mean that staff don't always get things right.



People with a learning disability can be treated for the wrong problem.



Learning disability services and mental health services don't always work together. This means people don't always get the right support.



To really understand someone's mental health, you must spend time to get to know them.



You need to find out how people feel and behave when there is no problem.

Things to look out for

If someone is struggling with their mental health, they might:



- not be acting like their usual self



- be very quiet or want to be alone a lot



- not want to do the things they normally enjoy



- have strange thoughts or worries



- not look after themselves properly

Things that affect how you feel

There are lots of things in life that can affect our mental health. Things like:



- problems at home or in relationships



- big life changes. Things like losing your job or the death of someone you love



- feeling under lots of stress, like not having any money



- feeling lonely or being bullied



- worrying about problems in the world like illness and war

Stress



Stress is our body's way of telling us we have too much to cope with.

It can happen if you:

- have to deal with something new

or

- have no control over what is happening to you



Stress is really bad for you and can affect you in lots of different ways.

For example:

- not being able to sleep



- feeling upset and sad a lot





- feeling angry a lot and shouting at people



- doing things that are bad for you like drinking alcohol or smoking a lot



- having problems with headaches and tummy ache



- hardly eating anything or eating too much



- not doing enough exercise



Most people experience stress at some time in their life.



Some people are more at risk of stress. This might be because of things like:

- not having a job or enough money



- having a long term health condition



- being treated unfairly because of things like their race, age or gender

Anxiety



Anxiety is when you feel worried a lot of the time.



Being worried can have a big effect on daily life. If you have anxiety, you might:

- not be able to stop thoughts racing round your head



- get stuck on a thought and keep thinking about it



- feel panicky and worried something bad will happen



- find it hard to focus on things and get things done



- have problems sleeping and not eating properly



- not want to go out or go to new places



Panic attacks

When people are really anxious, this can sometimes cause a **panic attack**.



If you have a panic attack, you might feel:

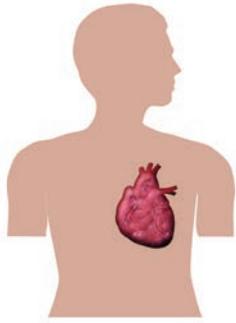
- you cannot breathe properly



- really hot or cold



- unsteady on your feet or feeling faint or dizzy



- you have a really fast heartbeat. You might feel like you are having a heart attack



- you are confused about where you are and what is happening

Depression

Depression is when you have a very low mood for a long time.



You might feel sad a lot and not feel like doing anything. You might struggle to stay happy and do everyday things.



If you have depression, you might:



- not want to go out or do things you usually enjoy



- feel really sad a lot or even think about taking your own life



- have trouble remembering things and paying attention



- feel really down, upset and not able to settle



- feel tired all of the time



- not eat much or eat too much

Schizophrenia



We say this as **skit-zo-free-nee-a**. Schizophrenia is a serious mental health problem.



It can be hard to spot at first.



Schizophrenia has lots of different symptoms that can come and go.

They include:

- feeling upset angry and confused
- not trusting people around you and thinking people are out to get you





- imagining things are there when they are not



- hearing voices in your head that no one else can hear. You might feel like someone else is controlling what you think



- not making sense when you talk or not talking at all



- having problems with your memory and not being able to pay attention

Self harm



Self harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose.



A person might self harm because they:

- can't cope with their thoughts and feelings



- are punishing themselves for something



- have been bullied or abused



- have had a big loss in their life or have lots of problems



People with a learning disability may have more chance of doing self harm.



It is most likely to affect people who:

- have more serious learning disabilities



- are unable to see or hear very well



- find it hard to communicate and say how they feel



- have autism

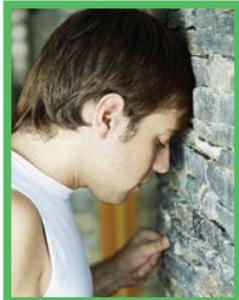


People with a learning disability can self harm by:

- biting themselves



- scratching their skin



- banging their head



- poking their eyes



- being sick



Often when people self harm it can be because they are in pain.

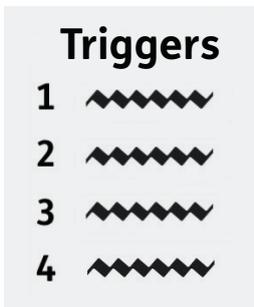


The person is not able tell you how they feel.

Ways to help people stop self harming include:



- spend time with the person. Teach them new ways of telling others how they feel



- try to find out what is causing them to self harm



- ask for help from doctors or staff with special training in helping people with self harm



People who self harm have more chance of trying to kill themselves.



It is really important the person gets the right support quickly.



Try to help the person by:

- letting them know you are there for them



- talking to them about what help they think they need



- supporting them to ask for help



- always letting them be in control of their own decisions



- helping them to feel good about themselves. Talk about the good things in their life

Side effects from taking tablets and medicine



Lots of people take tablets or medicine to help with their mental health.



This helps people to live their life and look after their mental health better.



It can help to stop people needing to go into hospital for treatment.



There are different types of medication for different problems.



People with a learning disability are often given more **psychotropic medicine** than other people.

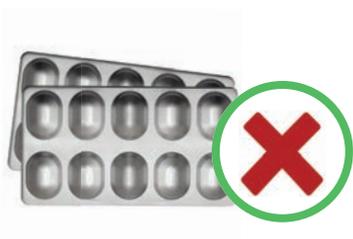
We say it like this **si -co - tropic**.



This medicine affects how your brain works. It can make you really sleepy and quiet.



This medicine is sometimes used to control people's behaviour.



But this is not what the medicine should be used for.



People are being given it for the wrong reason.

The medicine can have side affects.
You might:



- feel drugged up and sleepy all the time



- put on weight



- have serious health problems



A group of people in the UK are working on a big project called **STOMP**.



The project is to stop people with a learning disability being given too many psychotropic drugs.



They are trying to help people be healthy and have a good life.

Social isolation



Social isolation means when you spend a lot of time alone. You may not want to leave your house.



You might stop doing your normal activities. You might stop seeing or speaking to your friends and family.



Lots of things can stop you from wanting to leave your house. It could be because you:

- have bad health or have been ill for a long time



- are disabled



- do not feel safe or want to use public transport



- are suffering from abuse or harm



- are poor and don't have enough money

Some people find it hard to go out because of their mental health. This could be because they:



- are depressed and feel low



- are worried about things



- don't feel comfortable around other people



- are sad and upset because they have had a loss

Signs that someone is socially isolated

You should look out for changes in a person. They might be doing things like:



- feeling stressed and worried



- being violent or angry



- not looking after themselves properly. For example, not washing themselves or wearing clean clothes



- always wanting to stay at home and not come out



- having problems sleeping and remembering things



Feeling included in your community



It is really important for people to have friends and relationships.



Being with other people helps your mental health.



Being part of your local community can help you meet with other people.



A **community** can be a local group near where you live. Things like:

- a walking group or local art club

or

- an online group where you meet people on the internet





Learning new skills and making friends helps us feel like we belong.



People with a learning disability might need extra support to take part in their community.

They should be supported to find things they like to do.

Using different ways to communicate



Not everyone uses words to communicate with other people.



If people do not understand your communication, you cannot have a say.

You won't be involved in making decisions.



Support staff will find out how a person usually communicates and makes choices.



It is really important for staff to get to know the person first.



People use lots of different things to help them communicate. This could include:

- pointing to pictures



- using a word or sound board



- using a computer



Support staff will always find the way that is best for the person.



It can take a while to learn new ways of communicating with people. Staff will be calm and patient.

Safety at home



It is really important that you know how to stay safe at home. Here are some things you can do to stay safe.

If someone knocks at your door:



- always look who it is before you open the door



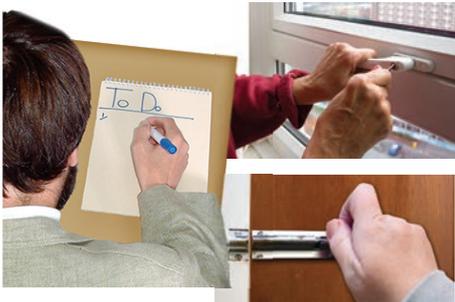
- if you don't know the person, you do not have to let them in



- make sure you always ask to see someone's identification badge first



Choose a safe place to keep your keys. Make sure you can get to them quickly in an emergency.



Write a checklist of things you need to do before you go out or go to bed.

Things like shutting windows and locking your doors.



Most accidents happen to people when they are at home.



The highest number of accidents are from people falling at home.



Check to see if there is anything that might cause you to have a fall. Things like:

- it being too dark or too light



- slippy or uneven floors



- wearing shoes with heels, things like flip flops or some kinds of slippers



- leaving things out on the floor



Fire safety

It is really important to think about fire safety.

There are some things you can do to help stop a fire happening. Things like:



- make sure you have fire alarms and that they work



- check any wires are not old and broken



- do not leave the kitchen whilst you are cooking. If you do, make sure you turn any pans off



- close all of your inside doors when you go to bed



The fire service has lots more information about how to keep safe.

Staying safe when you go out



It is really important that people have the right skills to keep themselves safe.



People with a learning disability might need extra support when they are out and about.



Write a checklist of things you need to remember and do before you go out.



Things like:

- let someone know where you are going



- close all your doors and windows



- check that your plugs and cooker are turned off



- remember to take your bus pass and mobile phone with you



- plan how you will get to where you are going



- pack a bag of things you might need when you are out



- take phone numbers of people you need to contact if there is an emergency



- take any medication out with you

Mindfulness



Mindfulness is about having some time out to relax and be at peace with yourself.



It is about giving your mind a break from all your thoughts and feeling calm.



Mindfulness makes you think about where you are right now.

What you can feel, see, hear and smell.



It helps you let go of your thoughts and clear your mind.



Mindfulness can really help people with a learning disability.



It can help support good mental health. It helps with things like worrying, depression and stress.

Having healthy relationships



We all need relationships in our life. We have the right to choose our relationships.

It's good to have different types of people in our lives. People like:

Family

This is your mum and dad, or brothers and sisters. Anyone who is related to you.



Friends

These are people you like and choose to spend your time with





Boyfriend or girlfriend

This is a special person in your life that you want to have a close relationship with.



People you work together with

This could be people at your job or college. It could also include your support worker, doctor or other health staff.



It is important to have people in our life who love us and are there for us. It helps us feel well.



People with a learning disability aren't always told about sex and relationships.

This means no-one explains what good sex and relationships look like.



People can get themselves into unhealthy relationships that make them feel bad and unhappy.



There is lots of information and training for people with a learning disability around healthy relationships.



People with a learning disability need to understand about things like:

- the law and consent. This is about if you agree to have sex or not. It is always your choice



- meeting people online and staying safe



- understanding sexual abuse and safe sex



- grooming and exploitation. This is when someone pretends to like you so they can:



- use you for sex



- Take your money



- Or get you to break the law for them



Signs of a not very good relationship are:

- changing yourself to try and fit in or please someone new



- you stop being with your friends and doing things you enjoy



- you have to pay for everything and don't have any money



- you worry a lot



You can get more information about healthy relationships here:

**[www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/
what-we-do/supported-loving/
supported-loving-toolkit](http://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving/supported-loving-toolkit)**