



Supporting Mental Health in the Community

WCVA and Samaritans Swansea recognise that in the rapidly changing situation we are all now working and living in, community organisations are becoming more vital than ever before in supporting individuals. This can mean that organisations are supporting people in new ways and providing front line mental health response in the communities they work in.

If you feel that someone is in danger or that they require additional support, please call the numbers listed below. The resources in this document have been provided by Samaritans Swansea to help you feel more confident talking about mental health and tips for you to use and share.

Samaritans – call 116 123 free or email joe@samaritans.org for a response in 24 hours. This service is available for everyone 24/7.

PAPYRUS – call 0800 068 4141 free or text 07860 039967. This service is for young people, 9am- 12am daily. You can also email pat@papyrus-uk.org.

NHS non-emergency – England/ Scotland call 111. Wales call 0845 46 47.

Mental Health Matters

A little stress in life is normal but too much can be overwhelming. When life feels out of control, it's not unusual for us to feel down or have suicidal feelings – many of us do. What matters is not letting it get on top of us and take over.

We can't control everything that happens to us in life. But we can control how we react. This means recognising when you're feeling out of control and taking steps to do something about it.

As well as making us feel miserable, long-term overload will increase your risk of serious disease including heart disease and high-blood pressure. It can lead to poor decisions which will make you less effective at work and at home. If unaddressed it may damage relationships with people you love and form self-destructive behaviours.

But this is temporary, and there are steps we can take to readdress the balance in our lives and get back in control.

3 minute time-out

This will lower heart-rate and blood-pressure and help put you in control.

Minute 1

Deliberately refocus attention. Change position or stop moving. Perhaps close your eyes. Ask yourself: what is happening to me right now?

Minute 2

Now you're aware of what's going on and how you feel, focus on your breath. Follow the air out of your body.

Minute 3

Move awareness back out again like the lens of a camera getting wider. Slowly take in the word.

Take a final deep breath and move forward. You'll be able to think more clearly and make better decisions now than before the time out.

Get back in balance

We all think we know people who never seem to lose control. But this truth is these people don't exist. The reason they seem to take it all in their stride is they know how to react, how to get back in balance, get a good night's sleep and go on the next day. They're probably using some of the ideas included in this document even if they don't realise it.

Suicide kills nearly 6,000 people a year in the UK which shows we are not alone in feeling overwhelmed and not dealing with these feelings can have serious consequences.

React Smart: Talk, listen, take control

Talking and listening always helps because when we talk, we see a solution we would probably never find through thinking alone. After all that's why humans have always lived and worked in groups and not alone. Often you don't need any special skills for this. You can listen to a friend. A friend can listen to you.

There's no shame in asking for expert support when you need it – from your GP or from a helpline.

Since you can't control what happens to you in life, only what you do about it, sometimes asking for support is the best way to take back control. There are many places to find what you need, the numbers at the beginning of this document are a great place to start.

Top tips for becoming a better listener

1. Show you care
2. Have patience
3. Use open questions
4. Say it back
5. Have courage

How to look out for others

We're all different but the warning signs are much the same for everyone: tiredness, disrupted sleep, irritability, addictive or dangerous behaviours, and/or losing interest in work, sex, food or anything else that's usually enjoyable.

Keep an eye out for your friends, family and people you work with. If you're concerned the best thing you can do is keep in touch and keep communication open. Perhaps do something together and have a chat. It's okay to talk about the difficult things, even suicide. That's how we get through it.

Get out of yourself

You can get out of your own head physically by taking exercise. Just a walk if you can't do anything more active. This gets the feel-good hormones buzzing around your body.

Or change what is happening in your head. Read. Play. Write. Study. Learn something new – a skill or language.

The quickest way is just to take notice of your surroundings. Perhaps go outside, look up, look around. Take a breath.

Connect with others

The greatest human gift is our ability to communicate. We're lucky to have it. Connect by meeting a friend, helping someone, joining something, volunteering, playing a sport or a game.

And laugh – it's an instant connection.

Get some rest

When you're overloaded sleep might feel like the last thing you need. But it's probably the thing you need most.

Get a bed routine that works for you. Use the best for sleeping. No screens. Read or listen to the radio or audiobooks to wind down.

Drink, drugs and caffeine will interfere with sleep – and may lead to poor decision making – so best to avoid them.