

KEEPING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN CHECK

A guide for young
people in Surrey Heath



2021 EDITION

Michael Gove MP

A **FREE** information
booklet from your local
Member of Parliament

A mental health problem is when it becomes difficult for you to cope with how you feel, think or act. Looking after your mental health can increase your confidence and make everyday activities more enjoyable.

If you're struggling with how you're feeling or going through a difficult time, it's vital that you know you can reach out to your peers, family, teachers, and charities for help. You don't have to suffer alone.

I hope that this short guide will give you tips and information on making sure that you look after your mental health and that of those around you.

You can find the latest advice surrounding mental health for young people at [nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/).

In the meantime, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

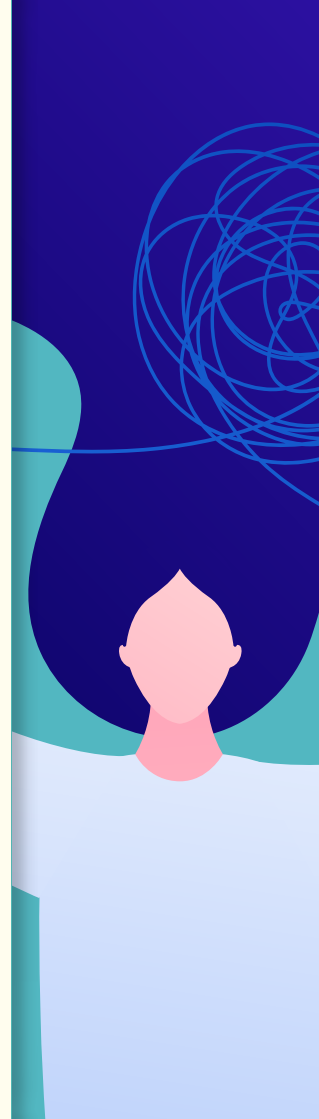


UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Each year, around 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems – it's completely normal to feel overwhelmed or under pressure.

Recognising that we need to talk to someone or change our routine to benefit our mental health is really important. You might have feelings that you don't understand, like:

- Just not feeling yourself or feeling that something isn't right
- Finding it hard to enjoy things you normally would, like hobbies or spending time with friends and family
- Feeling angry or sad
- Wanting to be alone
- Having strange thoughts that you don't understand



POSITIVE COPING MECHANISMS

If you're struggling with your mental health, it's a good idea to find some positive coping mechanisms that work for you. It's difficult adjusting back to normal life now that lockdown has ended. If you feel uncertain or uncomfortable, it's important to focus on what you can control.

Mind has suggested using the following positive coping mechanisms:

1. Understand how you feel. Find a mechanism that helps you to understand and accept your feelings. You might want to talk to a parent, carer, friend, or helpline such as Childline. Or find an activity that allows you to clear your head like running or drawing. Ask yourself "What would I say to a friend who was thinking this?"

2. Build relationships. Spending time with friends, family, or partners, whether in person or not can help us feel better and boost our wellbeing. Make sure to keep in touch and have someone you can trust. You may find it helpful to connect with others who understand through organisations like Mind.



POSITIVE COPING MECHANISMS

3. Coping in difficult moments.

Find a grounding activity and distract yourself. Try to name five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. If you feel that you're at risk, call Samaritans on 116 123.

4. Plan and control what you can.

Write down your worries before you go to bed and go over them in the morning. This can help you to work out what no longer needs your attention, what you can do to make yourself feel better, and what is out of your control. Practice self-care by making time to do things that make you relax and feel good.

5. **Keep yourself well.** Take care of your basic needs - have a good sleep routine, eat healthily, stay active, and be kind to yourself.



HELPING OTHERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Many of us ignore the signs that we need to look after our own mental health, or that of others around us. We need to be mindful that when we're struggling it's hard to reach out, so we should all be conscious of how those around us might be feeling.

According to the Every Mind Matters campaign, there are a number of things you can do to help if someone you're close to is struggling:

Express concern by letting someone know you're worried. It's a good way to start a conversation about how they are feeling, and it also shows the person that you care and that you have time for them.

Reassure them, because the first

time someone mentions their worries is a huge step. Let them know that you're there for them if and when they need to talk.

Be patient as you won't always know the full story. Just being there for someone can be a huge help if they want to open up to you at a later date.

Look after yourself when looking after others. It can be upsetting to hear someone you care about in distress. Make sure that you take time to yourself so that you can relax and do things that you enjoy.

Offer some practical help like an act of kindness. Ask them what would be helpful, or find some practical information if they are not in a position to do it themselves.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WHEN YOU'RE AT HOME

It's really important to make sure that you have a structure to your day when you're at home, so here's a 6-point plan for your day:

1. Plan Make sure you don't stay in your pyjamas all day – keep a regular routine that will keep your confidence up. And try to start your day at the same time that you usually would, because your body will stay in its natural rhythm.

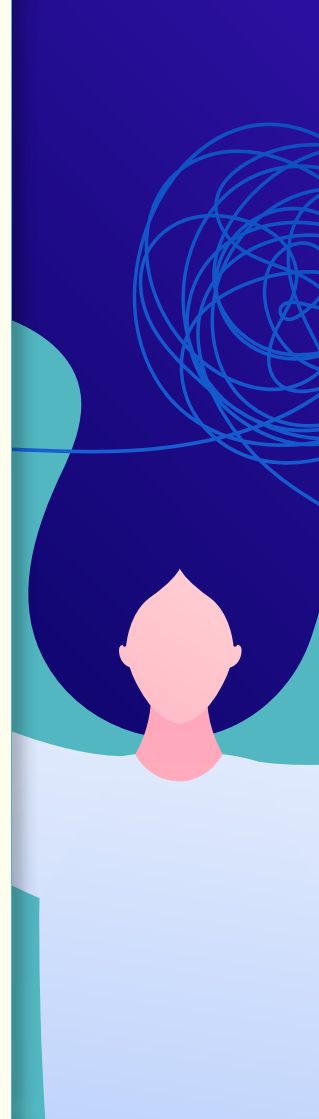
2. Move Keeping active and exercising where you are able to is key to reducing stress, increasing energy levels and helps your sleep pattern. And if you're stuck for motivation, there are plenty of exercise routines on YouTube that you could look at!

3. Relax The NHS website has plenty of relaxation techniques that you could look at. They'll help relieve stress and will help give you a sense of well-being.

4. Connect If you can't go out that day, you could speak to your friends virtually or spend time with people in your home. Speaking to someone might feel daunting, but it can really help. Or you might want to do something fun to distract yourself.

5. Reflect At the end of the day, think about what went well and what you could improve on. What were you grateful for during the day? How can you make tomorrow better? Think about writing down your thoughts so you can go back to them at a later date.

6. Sleep In difficult times, you might have trouble getting a good night's sleep. To improve your sleep, try and stick to your usual bedtime and get up in the morning when you usually would. And try to avoid using your phone, tablet, computer or TV before bedtime.



USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

WHERE CAN I ACCESS TREATMENT AND SUPPORT?

There are lots of different places. You may want to speak to:

- Your school, college, or University
- Your family
- Your doctors' surgery



IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE URGENTLY OR NEED ADVICE

Samaritans

Call: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Calls to 116 123 are free and will not appear on itemised phone bills

NHS

Call: 111 [111.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

[mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)

Call: 0300 123 3393 (open 9am–6pm, Mon–Fri)

I hope that you found this guide useful, but if you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Michael Gove MP

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