



Mind Your Mates 2020

Week 1: Spotting The Signs

This week aims to:

- Introduce you to the 2020 campaign
- Help you to begin spotting the signs that someone may be struggling with their mental health
- Explore the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on our mental health





A big hello

Welcome to this years **Mind Your Mates** campaign with **York Mind**. We're reaching out to individuals and businesses (like yourself) within York, to help remove the stigma around mental health.

2020 has been a particularly difficult year for many of us, and the pandemic has had a devastating impact upon the nation's mental health.


Many of us have struggled with unprecedented loneliness, loss, fear and financial difficulties this year, which is why it's more important than ever that we look out for one another.

The Mind Your Mates campaign hopes to raise awareness of mental health issues and provide you with practical tips to help yourselves, your friends and your colleagues who may be struggling.

This week our focus is on **Spotting The Signs** that someone may be struggling with their mental health, and what you can do to challenge the stigma surrounding it.

Lets get into it...





How common are mental health problems?

- In England, 1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health problem of some kind of mental health problem each year
- However only 1 in 8 adults with a mental health problem are currently getting *any* kind of treatment
- It's very likely that people you know will be dealing with a mental health problem at any given time

Knowing what signs and changes to look for within your friends, family and colleagues can help open up the conversation around mental health, and let them know that they don't have to suffer in silence.





What are the signs that someone I know may be struggling?

- If they are appearing withdrawn and not like their usual selves
- A new pattern of being late or absent to work
- Frequently saying no to social events or gatherings
- Not enjoying or pursuing their usual hobbies or interests
- Excessive drug or alcohol abuse
- Being tearful or particularly emotional and sensitive
- Appearing unusually agitated or snappy
- Sleeping too much / not sleeping enough
- Asking for a lot of reassurance
- Not replying to texts / calls

It's important to note that everyone's experience with mental health problems is unique to them, and often quite complex, so not all of these will apply to everyone.

What are the signs of some common mental health problems?

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) - 6 in 100 people

People with anxiety may experience:

- An on-going sense of dread and fearing the worst
- Being tense, uneasy or unable to relax
- Avoidance of certain situations
- Excessively seeking assurance from others

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) - 1 in 100 people

People with OCD may experience:

- Intrusive thoughts and images
- Compulsions and mental that they feel they must complete
- Appearing pre-occupied or as though they aren't entirely present with you
- A fear of causing harm to others

Depression - 3 in 100 people

People with depression may experience:

- Feeling empty and numb
- Avoiding social events and activities they usually enjoy
- Lack of confidence and self esteem
- Appetite loss and fatigue
- Appearing irritable or snappy

Disordered eating

People with eating problems may experience:

- Restricting the amount of foods they eat
- A fear of eating in public or in front of others
- A preoccupation with food and the effect it has on their body
- Comparing themselves to other people
- Feeling very anxious about food

This is by no means an extensive list - please feel free to visit the [Mind website](https://www.mind.org.uk) for more guidance on specific mental health problems

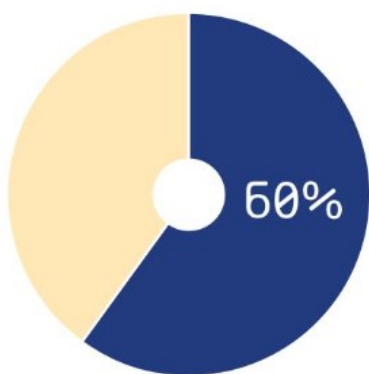


Has coronavirus affected your mental health?

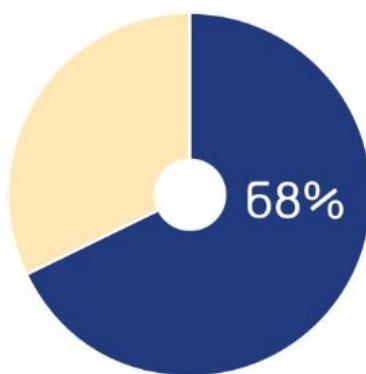
If you feel this year has been particularly tough on your mental health, then you are not alone.

The effects of social distancing, lockdown and the loss of jobs, plans and loved-ones is taking a huge toll on our well-being.

Whether you had been living with mental health problems before the pandemic and have felt your symptoms worsened, or whether you are experiencing mental health difficulties for the first time - we understand and we are here for you.



Adults



Young people

In a recent survey by Mind, more than half of adults (50%) and over two thirds of young people (68%) said their mental health got worse during lockdown



Looking out for one another whilst social distancing

The pandemic this year has meant many of us have spent much less time in-person with our loved ones and colleagues. It may be trickier to spot when someone you know is struggling from a distance, but here are some tips that may help:

- **Check in with the friend who has gone “off-radar”** or appears to be withdrawing themselves. They may just be busy, but it can be reassuring to check
- **Video calls** - it can be much easier to see how someone is really doing through video calls. You can often get a better picture of someone’s mood and wellbeing through their voice and body-language than you can via text
- **Make time for one another** - schedule in and make quality time for “virtual catch ups” so that someone isn’t caught off guard, feels rushed or isn’t in a situation they can talk openly in
- **Group chats** - alongside scheduled, quality time with friends, group chats can be a great way to make one another laugh and mirror the light-hearted friendships you may have at work or with a group of friends



My personal story: Living with anxiety in lockdown

“My name is Isobel, I am currently volunteering for York Mind, and wanted to share a little about how lockdown affected my own mental health.

I have always struggled with anxiety (in fact, they even used to call me Anxious-Annie) at school, it's something friends and family make fun of in a loving way, and something I'd just sort of accepted as part of my character. But in recent years I'd been managing my anxiety and had been getting by considerably well.



When lockdown was announced back in March, I panicked.

Not only did hearing the words “global pandemic” send my OCD into a frenzy of washing my hands compulsively and being scared to leave my flat, but I also lived entirely alone and was separated from my boyfriend and family.

As hard as I tried to stay motivated and keep to routines, it felt meaningless. I felt very isolated and lonely, and when loved ones did reach out to me, I felt so deep into a fog of depression and anxiety, that I didn't have much to say and pushed people away.

At home and alone with my thoughts 24/7 meant my anxieties jumped at the chance to take over, and there was no one and nothing to tell them to stop worrying or to calm down. A good day meant I had made it out of my bed and managed to get some fresh air, but these felt rare, and the days were a real struggle.

My personal story: living with anxiety in lockdown - continued

“After some particularly low points, I couldn't hide how I was feeling from my loved ones anymore, and decided to tell my partner and my Dad the extent of how I'd been feeling.



This was crucial. I was encouraged to tell my GP and get some advice, my doctor was really helpful and understanding. I was prescribed some medication and it felt really good to be able to tell a professional how I'd been feeling.

My loved ones made sure to set up regular video calls and “Netflix-nights” to give me small social interactions to look forward to, and I really got through the days by making plans for the future, reminding myself that things wouldn't always feel this rough.

Luckily, being open about how I had been feeling meant my partner understood I wouldn't always be the usual cheery and happy me, and this took away a lot of the guilt I had been feeling surrounding struggling.

On days when I did feel unable to speak to my loved ones about how I was feeling, I rang and spoke to Samaritans which took off the pressure of having to put on a brave face around the people I cared about.

Day-by-day things got a little easier, and I'm back to my regular self now. But if you're struggling at all, then reaching out can really help. I learnt to take one day at a time and to really celebrate the small victories!”



To summarise:

This week our focus was on introducing the campaign and helping to explore some of the signs that someone may be struggling with their mental health. We've also looked at the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, and hopefully prompted conversations amongst your teams about mental health and the importance of it.

In Week 2 we will begin to explore practical tips to help you support those around you who may be struggling.

In the meantime, keep in touch via social media by using the hashtag **#MindYourMates2020**



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See you next week!

