



Mind Your Mates 2020

Week 2: Supporting Someone Else

This week aims to:

- Help you to get talking about mental health
- Provide you with some practical tips to support someone you know who may be struggling
- Explore helpful and unhelpful things you can say when talking about mental health



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Hello again,

This week we're providing you with some practical tips to get chatting to your colleagues and loved ones, to help open up the conversation on mental health difficulties.

Last week we explored some signs you can look for that someone may be struggling with their mental health. But you may feel that it's difficult to know what to say if you think someone is going through a hard time.

Perhaps you don't see them very often in-person, or you don't feel as though you've known them long enough to notice when something is wrong. You may also be worried of saying the wrong thing.

Being able to **talk openly about mental health** and how people are doing is often the first step you can take to helping colleagues and friends feel supported.

In any given week in England, 1 in 6 of us report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety or depression). Whilst across a lifetime, 1 in 5 people will experience having suicidal thoughts.

So let's take a look at how you can support someone who is struggling...

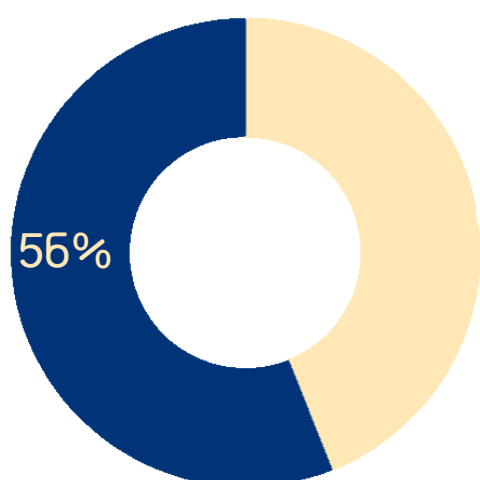


Can I really make a difference to my friends?

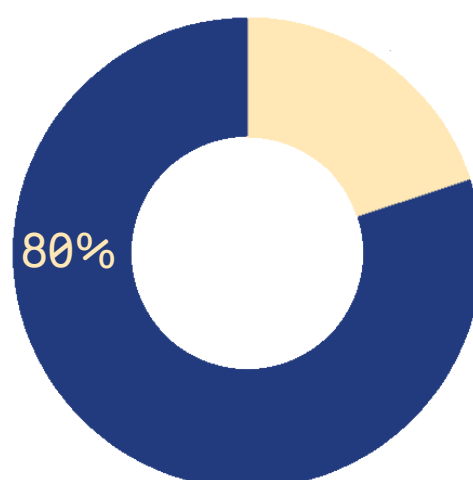
Yes - up to 55% of adults with diagnosable mental health problems and more than 80% of adolescents and children **do not** receive needed treatment.

This means that as friends, family members and colleagues, we can be **important influences** in helping someone to get help and feel supported when dealing with mental health problems.

Those with diagnosable mental health problems who do not receive treatment



Adults



Children and adolescents



Checking in with your friends and loved ones

What does it actually mean to “be there” for someone?
How do you support someone in your life?

- **Checking in with one another often** - whether via text, phone-call, video call or in-person
- **Staying up-to-date with what’s going on in their lives** - this means you can support them when life can feel tough (ie. job losses, relationship problems, financial uncertainty, health problems etc.)
- **Listening to them with no judgement**
- **Not feeling the need to problem-solve with solutions and advice** - sometimes just having their experiences and feelings validated and listened to can be all someone needs from you
- **Being willing to share both ways** - sharing your own highs and lows with someone will let them feel valued and important to you, and let them know they’re not the only one who experiences difficult times

Tackling fears around speaking about mental health

It can often feel difficult to start talking to someone about their mental health, and it may even seem quite daunting. But it doesn't need to be. Here's some tips:

Don't be afraid to show your vulnerabilities - Sometimes when someone is struggling with their mental health, they may fear speaking about it, with the belief that they're being a burden. If you're able to share when you're feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed, for example - this may help them feel comfortable enough to do the same

Ask how they are - Not everyone will feel confident enough to mention unprompted that they have been struggling. Ask how they're doing or how they've been getting on. Sometimes you may need to ask more than once for them to understand that you're there for them and do care

Try not to make it a big deal - Everyone has mental health, sometimes it's better and sometimes it's worse. So making it part of casual conversation can help people feel comfortable enough to open up





Quick tips for chatting about mental health

Here are some quick general tips to try and keep in mind when chatting to someone about their mental health:

Don't

- Minimise their feelings
- Compare their feelings to others
- Call them selfish
- Express apathy
- Deny their feelings

Do

- Tell them you care
- Ask how you can help
- Take care of tasks like chores or errands
- Offer to help them find help
- Express empathy and understanding





Finding the right words


Every friendship and relationship is unique, and you'll have words that 'just feel' right to you - so use these as inspiration but remember to stay true to yourself, too.

Helpful things to say:

- "That sounds so tough, I'm proud of you for hanging in there"
- "Is there anything I can do to help you through this?"
- "I know it's really difficult to see right now, but we can get through this and I promise it won't always feel this way"
- "I really value you and appreciate you in my life, don't feel bad for letting me know what's going on, I want to be there for you"

Unhelpful things to say:

- "Can you just try and see the positive side?"
- "That's not even worth worrying about, I can't understand why you're stressed"
- "Other people have it a lot worse than you, you know. You should count yourself lucky"
- "You're just going to have to snap out of this and pull yourself together"




Antonio's personal story: The importance of checking in with friends

Hey! My name's Antonio and I want to start off by saying that I am terrible at catching up with friends. At least, lately I have been. I rarely keep up with messages and I often forget to ask how my friends are doing. It's not because I don't care, but more because I convinced myself that I was better off alone. Thankfully, sooner than later, I learnt that being alone doesn't make anything better.



I spent the lockdown this year relying on a single person for emotional support and company. I was in a relationship, even though during lockdown it was entirely online. Somewhere along the line, that person left, and I found myself drowning in a silence that I had set myself up for. I could have messaged my friends, sure, but too much time had passed since I'd spoken to any of them.

I felt disconnected from everyone. It took an entire month of quietly suffering by myself until I finally told someone what I was going through.



Antonio's personal story: The importance of checking in with friends

I felt guilt, and a little bit of shame I suppose. I thought that I couldn't just appear out of nowhere after letting myself become so disconnected from people that cared about me, and expect them to still care. But I called them anyway, and I was wrong.



After we spoke, I felt something that I hadn't felt in a long while - support. The kind of support that genuinely cares about you when you're engulfed in bad thoughts at 2am. The kind of love that asks for nothing back. I forgot how lucky I am to have these people in my life.

This led me to reaching out to more friends, which meant more talks, more hugs and a whole lot more laughter. Bit by bit it became a little easier to breathe again.

It can be really easy to forget how much you mean to the people that love you, especially when we've all been alone with our thoughts these past few months.

But if there is one advice, that I could give, to anyone currently feeling isolated from their loved ones, it would be to just reach out to them. Set up a video call, arrange to go for a coffee, have a movie night, play video games or even just send them a text. It is the first and most important step.



How can I support a colleague or employees if I'm still working from home?

For many, a return to workplaces over recent months has meant a return to regular social interactions with their team, and a return to the “normality” we lived in pre-lockdown.

However there are still many of us working from home for the foreseeable future. [Mind](#) has put together some tips for how line managers and employers can support their team's wellbeing and mental health whilst working remotely.

- **Maintain a positive work/life balance** - and encourage your team to do the same. Don't forget to take regular breaks and try and get outside for some fresh air if you can.
- **Check in with team members regularly.** - schedule online video calls via Zoom/Microsoft Teams/Skype to have regular check-ins and catch ups with everyone
- **Ask your team to create [wellness action plans](#)** - these allow your team to prepare for when they may not be feeling great, by giving them practical and clear steps to follow
- **Encourage an open and authentic dialogue around mental health** - and encourage your team to share when they may be struggling. Being honest and open with others can help put people at ease about sharing their own worries



To summarise:

This week our focus was on how you can begin to get chatting about mental health amongst friends and within workplaces. We're hoping you can make use of the tips shared this week to make mental health a normal part of everyday conversation, so that people struggling feel comfortable enough to open up.

In Week 3 we will begin to explore where and how to get help and support when dealing with mental illness or mental health problems.

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

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See you next week,
York Mind

