



Mind Your Mates 2020

Week 3: Getting support

This week aims to:

- Explore how to spot if someone is at risk of harming themselves or suicide
- Show you the different services available for support when dealing with a mental health crisis or emergency
- Explore how blogger Mia Violet, got professional support to help explore her feelings of depression, anxiety and struggles with her identity



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Hello,

We're back again for Week 3 of this year's **Mind Your Mates** campaign. This week we're taking a look at some practical steps you can take, in helping someone get the support they need long term, or more immediately if they're at risk of hurting themselves.

Whilst being able to chat to your friends and colleagues about mental health can be a great way to begin supporting someone who is struggling, there may be occasions where you feel out of your depth or unequipped to support your friend with a complex issue.

For many people, **seeking extra support** from service providers such as the NHS or mental health charities can make all the difference in helping if they are struggling.

If you've no previous experience of this, it may feel daunting to know when and **how to reach out for some extra help** and support. This week's newsletter intends to give you some straightforward tips from us at York Mind, to help you out if you find yourself in this situation.

Let's get into it.

Self-harm and suicide statistics

- In 2018, there were 6,859 deaths from suicide in the UK and ROI.
- The highest suicide rate in the UK, and in England alone, is among men aged 45 - 49
- Women are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts than men, but men are 3 times more likely to take their own life
- Suicide rates among young people have been increasing in recent years, the suicide rate for females in the UK is now at it's highest on record

Over the course of someone's lifetime...

- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts
- 1 in 14 people self harm
- 1 in 15 people attempt suicide



Are there any signs that someone is at risk of harming themselves?

It isn't always clear whether someone may be considering suicide; however there are several signs to be aware of that may indicate someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

- Talking about killing themselves or harming themselves
- Preoccupation with death or 'not being here'
- Hopelessness, talking about a bleak future or expressing that they have nothing to look forward to
- Personality changes (i.e. becoming withdrawn, reckless, rebellious, changes in sleeping or eating habits, neglecting their personal hygiene)
- Self loathing and hatred, saying that people would be better off without them
- Saying goodbye as though you are not going to see them again
- A sudden sense of calm, after a period of severe depression can indicate a person has decided to attempt suicide





What can I do to help?

It can feel distressing and upsetting to find that someone you know may be considering harming themselves or taking their own life, and you may feel unsure of what to do to help. Talking to them could be their first step towards getting help:

- **Start a conversation** - e.g. “I’ve been worried about you recently” “I might be wrong but you haven’t seemed your normal self lately”
- **Take them seriously** - it’s always better to assume someone is telling the truth about feeling suicidal than to assume that they aren’t
- **Try not to judge** - you may feel shocked, upset or frightened, but it’s important not to blame the person for how they are feeling
- **Don’t skirt around the topic** - ask directly whether they have thought about suicide or harming themselves
- **Offer reassurance** - reassure them that there are ways to get through these feelings and there is support available to help them, emphasise that you’ll be with them every step of the way





If you think someone is in immediate danger

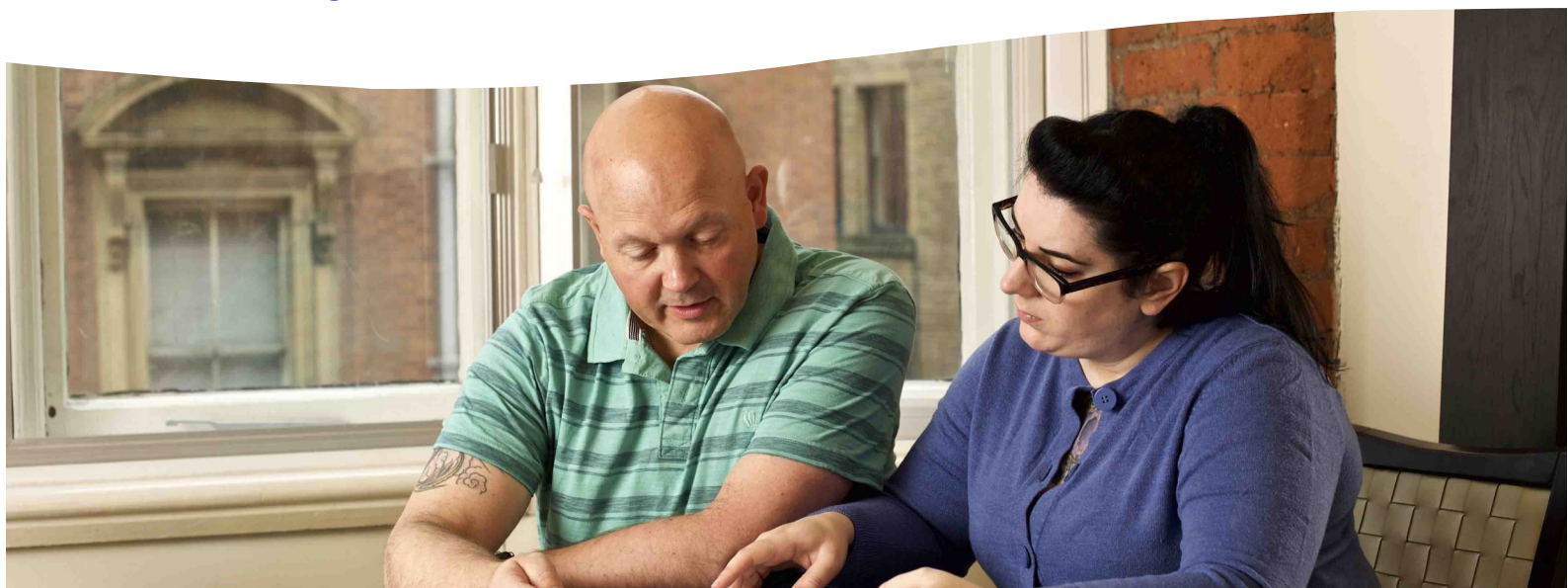
- Don't leave them on their own - remove anything that they may use to harm themselves
- Don't try and handle the situation completely on your own - seek help from a professional as soon as possible
- Take them to A&E if possible - or call 999 for an ambulance
- You can also call the NHS TEWV Crisis Service on 0300 0200 317 (if you live locally) or your own local crisis team or 111

If you're not in a situation like this right now, but you're worried someone you care about may experience a mental health crisis in the future, it can be useful to create a crisis plan with them, for what steps you will take together in an emergency.



If they're not in immediate danger

- **Encourage them to seek help** - whether that be through making a GP appointment, contacting a listening service, or self-referring for therapy through the NHS / local Minds
- **Be proactive** - often people feel as though they are burdening others with their mental health problems and may not get in touch. Reach out to them, visit them, invite them out, check they're taking their medication etc.
- **Help them make a safety plan** - create a plan of action for you both to follow if they feel suicidal or at risk again in the future. This can include a list of warning signs, coping strategies and contact numbers of people who can help
- **Stay in touch** - You are not personally responsible for someone else's actions, but ongoing support and contact can really help a person feel valued and cared for
- **Look after yourself** - it can be emotionally difficult caring for someone who is suicidal. Ensure you take time out to look after your own wellbeing too.





Other forms of mental health support

Getting help and support isn't only reserved for people who are feeling suicidal or thinking of harming themselves.

It's important to know that there is support available no matter how small *or* how big the problem may seem. If you're not experiencing suicidal thoughts or a severe form of mental illness then you may feel as though you just have to cope on your own. This isn't the case. You may want to reach out and ask for help if:

- You're worrying more than usual or feel anxious a lot
- You're finding it hard to enjoy life
- You are having thoughts and feelings that are difficult to cope with
- You're finding day-to-day life particularly difficult and harder than you usually would

“The first time I went to my GP about my anxiety, I was terrified. But he listened to me and validated all of my experiences, he really seemed to care about me and made me feel so much more at ease”

What support is out there?

Reaching out for some extra support for mental illness isn't a sign of a weakness or something to be ashamed of, instead it is *just* as valid as seeking help for a physical ailment, such as a broken leg or a wound on your arm.

You also don't need to be at your absolute rock-bottom to reach out for help or support with mental health problems. There are a range of services available no matter how small or how big the problem feels.

If you or someone you know is struggling, options include (but are not limited to):

- **Talking to your GP** - Talking to your GP about how you're feeling can kickstart getting further help and treatment
- **Find your local Mind** - National helpline: 0300 123 3393
- **Samaritans** - Phone: 116 123 / Text: 07725 90 90 90
- **NHS Crisis Services** - TEWV Crisis Service: 0300 0200 317
- **Emergency duty team** - Local to North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York 01509 780780
- **IAPT York and Selby** - Phone: 01904 556840 or complete an online form to see if you are suitable for talking therapy on the NHS for issues such as anxiety, depression, OCD, grief, low mood etc.



Mia's personal story: Seeking Support

“When I was a full-time student, my mental health was the worst it had ever been in my life. For a long time I didn’t question this. I was a student after all, I figured university was supposed to be stressful.



Late nights and anxiety had both been normalised to me as the standard “student experience”. With friends, I would often joke about how little sleep I got as if it was an achievement, but the reality was actually much more disturbing. When trying to sleep I would suffer from regular anxiety attacks and distressing intrusive thoughts. I was convinced that I was steadily losing my mind.

The idea of talking to my doctor, or even my friends, about what was really going on was unthinkable to me.

I had never asked for help with my mental health before. I didn’t know what would happen or if I even deserved any help at all. But one night I knew I couldn’t continue this way. I had to talk to somebody. So I sat up, turned my laptop back on, and sent an e-mail to my local counselling service.

All I could think about on the way to my appointment was how I had always kept all of my mental health issues to myself. I didn’t even know if I could share them aloud. I worried I would freeze up and be too scared to speak. When I walked into my counsellor’s office and she patiently explained how counselling would work, and that everything was confidential, I started to relax. Once my new counsellor had finished explaining things, she asked me what I’d like to discuss.

One topic sprung right to mind. It wasn’t about my coursework or even about university at all, it was about my identity.

Mia's personal story: continued

With surprising ease I explained that I was struggling with questions around my sexuality and gender. I gave an overview of my life and explained how my anxiety had spiked over the last 2 years. My counsellor then said something I'd never heard before:

'That must be really difficult.'

It was. It was excruciatingly difficult, but until that moment I'd never realised just how much I'd been carrying around and keeping to myself.



At the end of the session, I walked out feeling happier and lighter than I had in months

From then on I shared my fears, my problems, and my history with my counsellor. Through her guidance I was able to learn new things about myself and find the courage to make changes to my life that I had thought were impossible. Best of all, both my stress and anxiety issues became much easier to control the more I worked on myself.

Looking back on the experience now, I see my decision to go to counselling as one of the best I've ever made in my entire life. I didn't realise it at the time, but my anxiety was being drastically exacerbated by my personal issues. Had I treated just the anxiety itself, I'd have missed the real cause. It was counselling and the safe space that it provided which allowed me the ability to heal and grow.

Without counselling I don't know where, or even who, I'd be, but I'm certain I wouldn't be as remotely safe and happy as I am now.



To summarise:

This week our focus was on getting the right support in a mental health crisis or emergency, as well as how to reach out for support and get help if you are struggling at all.
We hope you've found it useful.

In Week 4 we will be exploring how to maintain good mental health, using a range of tips and techniques to help us feel at our best.

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

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See you next week,
York Mind

