

SUPPORTING SOMEONE WITH THEIR **MENTAL HEALTH**

Most people don't treat their mental health in the same way that they do their physical health - but we all should. If someone was experiencing back pain or had a swollen ankle we'd expect them to get medical help but many people don't feel as able to seek help if their mind is unwell.

Being depressed isn't someone's fault. It's often down to chemical changes in the brain. When we're mentally unwell, negative emotions overwhelm our logical brain and this means our logical brain struggles to switch them off as it's overpowered.

Sometimes it's really clear why someone has become depressed but other times there isn't an obvious reason why they feel so down. Like many physical illnesses, depression can be treated and the person can recover but it can become worse if the person doesn't get help.

Every person is different but these are some signs that someone might be depressed and need support:

- **Feeling restless and agitated**
- **Sleeping lots or not at all**
- **Loss of appetite or overeating**
- **Feeling tearful**
- **Not wanting to talk to or be with people**
- **Not wanting to do things they usually enjoy**
- **Using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings**
- **Finding it hard to cope with everyday things**
- **Not replying to messages or being distant**
- **Their work doesn't appear to be at the same standard, they can't concentrate at work or they start to struggle to complete their work**
- **New pattern of unexplained lateness or absences**

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT SOMEONE WITH THEIR **MENTAL HEALTH**

- **Encourage them to talk about their struggle and actively listen.**
Enabling individuals to speak about what they are struggling with can be the best way of supporting them in what they're going through. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with someone if you are worried about them. For tips on how to do this search '**difficult conversation**' on www.samaritans.org
- **Encourage them to seek help for what they are struggling with.**
Remind the person, there is always someone to listen and support them with whatever is affecting them.
Visit www.portsmouth.gov.uk/mentalhealth for details of local and national support services. If you're supporting someone at work you can suggest they talk with their Employee Assistance Programme, HR representative, occupational health department, or another health professional, such as their GP. Offer to go with them if that might help.
- **Follow up.** When you are supporting someone always follow up with other people where possible to ensure that action has been taken.
- **Take care of yourself.** Supporting someone in distress can be distressing in itself. If you're helping someone who's struggling, make sure you take care of yourself as well. Visit www.portsmouth.gov.uk/mentalhealth for tips on looking after your mental health.



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