

# Real life, your life?

## Activity 06

### Feeling good, feeling bad



**We all deal with different feelings and emotions every day. Sometimes these are easy to cope with but sometimes it's much harder.**

**Who can you turn to when you need help?**

**This activity explores how teenagers can help themselves, and what professional support they have available to them.**

<b>Lesson time guide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completing this activity will take about 70 minutes. This includes time to discuss some of the issues and read a selection of the online support materials.</li></ul>
<b>QCDA PLTS Framework links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore issues, events or problems from different perspectives.</li><li>• Question their own and others' assumptions.</li><li>• Discuss issues of concern, seeking resolution where needed.</li><li>• Propose practical ways forward, breaking these down into manageable steps.</li></ul>
<b>Subject applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Citizenship, careers, PSHE and the society, health and development diploma.</li></ul>

We all feel extreme emotions and many of us suffer from stress at different times in our lives. A common time for this to happen is during the build up to taking exams.

Coping with the workload can be difficult – especially when all sorts of other things might be happening in your life. Making and keeping friends, stressful situations at home, eating healthily, problems with bullying – all of these and more are things young people often deal with.

Sometimes you might think that you're the only one coping with all this. It's not true, of course. It's good to talk things through with someone you can trust. This could be a friend, a teacher, a parent or care giver – maybe even a brother or sister.

If you don't think that there's anyone you know who you can talk to face-to-face, then there are helplines and organisations that can give you advice and support.

The NHS Choices website has lots of useful information to help teenagers cope with a range of issues. There's a section for guys and one for girls. Follow the links below to have a look.

[www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/TeenBoys/Pages/teenboyshome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/TeenBoys/Pages/teenboyshome.aspx)

[www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/TeenGirls/Pages/teengirlshome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/TeenGirls/Pages/teengirlshome.aspx)

There's a lot of encouragement today to make sure that we stay physically healthy. Most of us know what we need to do – even if we don't do it often enough.

But what about mental health? How do you stay healthy mentally?

We can't always know what's round the corner, but we can look after ourselves.

Here's a list of five factors that have been identified as important in maintaining mental health:

- **Feeling safe and looked after.**
- **Being able to give your opinions and have people listen to you.**
- **Giving positive attention to others (it could be a person or a pet).**
- **Getting respect for stuff you are good at.**
- **Having help with money and finances.**

Look at the list and work with your partner to put these five factors into an order of importance. Set them out in a diamond shape with the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. You might have two or three rows in the middle if you can't agree on the order.



For most of us, stress is something we cope with. But for about one in four people in the UK at some point in their lives it becomes more difficult to deal with. Have a look at these UK statistics:

- **Approximately 300 people out of 1,000 will experience mental health problems every year.**
- **230 of these will visit a GP.**
- **102 of these will be diagnosed as having a mental health problem.**
- **24 of these will be referred to a specialist psychiatric service.**

What do you think of these figures? Discuss your immediate thoughts and feelings about them with your partner.

Now have a look at this list of statistics:

- **Approximately 300 people out of 1,000 will experience health problems every year.**
- **230 of these will visit a GP.**
- **102 of these will be diagnosed as having a health problem.**
- **24 of these will be referred to a specialist medical service.**

Yes, it's the same four facts – but without any links to mental health!

Now what do you think when you look again at the figures in the first box? Do the numbers involved or the words 'mental' and 'psychiatric' now seem the most important?

One of the biggest problems faced by those who have some form of mental distress is prejudice. It's not difficult to see where this comes from: newspaper headlines, films and television programmes can all show prejudice against people with mental distress.



Mental distress is also often linked in the media with violence – in a study of the national press during 1996, it was found that negative terms were used in 40% of daily tabloid coverage of mental health issues and 45% of Sunday tabloid coverage<sup>1</sup>.

All these factors can create prejudice. But we can all help to change people's views of mental health.

Now, to review the information you've received so far:

- **Staying emotionally fit is no different than staying physically fit.**
- **There are five key factors that can help maintain good mental health.**
- **Many people are prejudiced against mental health.**

With your partner, use this grid to identify five things that you will do to maintain your good mental health.

Maintaining good mental health	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

So what does a health professional do? Here's a day in the life of two of the many professionals in the NHS who are involved in mental health care:

### **A day as a counselling psychologist**

This morning you're working at a GP surgery, providing therapy sessions for patients with a wide variety of emotional and psychological problems. You begin at 9am, talking with a middle-aged woman who's suffered a bereavement, and consequently developed a minor phobia of confined spaces. Together, you consider her life in a broader sense, including previous life experiences and general health. You encourage her to discuss her emotional state, and suggest possible behaviours she could practice to manage her distress and potentially overcome her phobia.

She leaves feeling happier and more able to cope with life, and you're pleased to be meeting with her again soon to monitor her progress. After seeing several more patients, you finish at 5pm. You find your work very rewarding and well-paid, with many opportunities for career advancement and personal development.

<sup>1</sup>from [www.mind.org.uk/Information/](http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/)

## A day in the life of a [dramatherapist](#)

You're based at your local NHS hospital, and start work at 9.00 am. Your first patient is a twelve year old boy who has become addicted to sniffing glue following his parents' divorce. He has a history of being bullied because of speech and language difficulties and cannot express himself with words. You help him make puppets based on characters from his favourite stories and encourage him to make sounds to express his feelings through the puppets. You are able to reassure him that there are people who can care for him.

Next you drive to the community centre, where you work with a group of refugees who are finding it hard to settle into a new way of life. You help them to express themselves by working with the stories from their homeland. Your days are always varied and you love working with different groups of people.

Working with people can be very rewarding. If this sounds like the sort of career you might be interested in, then follow the link below to look at careers on the Step into the NHS web site at [www.stepintothens.nhs.uk/careers-list-a-z.aspx](http://www.stepintothens.nhs.uk/careers-list-a-z.aspx).

