

## Mental Health Booklet.

### ● What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a term we hear used a lot. In workplaces, by management, by mainstream media, by celebrities and by role models. In the emergency services, front line services and armed forces, it is sometimes said in hushed tones.

Mental health is sometimes thought of to describe those suffering with a mental health condition. However, mental health is actually how your mental state and emotional wellbeing feels on a day-to-day basis.

Our mental health is something we all possess. Mental health can vary day to day, over months or over years and it can vary depending on what is going on in our lives at that time. Our mental health can be affected by our experiences, our self-esteem, our confidence levels, our relationships (whether they feel positive or negative or somewhere in between), our work situation (how much we feel we can be ourselves in our workplace, how we get on with others, how our managers and colleagues treat us, for example), traumas we experience, stress we face, bereavements and it can be affected by friendships (good or bad). Mental health can be affected by many others things as well.

When our mental health is good, life feels manageable, we feel fulfilled and have a sense of purpose, direction and satisfaction. When our mental health is good, even when we face situations that are deeply distressing or challenging, we feel resilient and we feel that we can push through them.

When our mental health feels eroded, low or like it is being chipped away at, our response to situations in life can be drastically affected. We won't feel the same level of energy or defence against uncertainty, managing stressful changes in our lives, disruption or negative events that normally we might feel ok dealing with.

If we have an immune system for our body to fight against infections, think of when your mental health is not good, your immunity and defence against attack from outer factors is not as strong.

### ● Mental Health as a Continuum.

Mental Health can be thought of as a "spectrum".

Having a look at the **mental health spectrum**, try to pinpoint where you feel like you are at today.



It can be helpful to “check in” with ourselves on a regular basis to see where we are at on the spectrum and how we are feeling. It is like a temperature check for your emotional wellbeing. This can allow us to see patterns, certain triggers for positive and negative feelings in our life.

Monitoring our mental health helps us to see when we are coping well so we know what personally helps us and it helps us to see when we are not coping so well so that we can monitor our mental health and learn coping techniques so we know how to get to a place we are happy at.

Day-to-day many of us can sit at feeling “ok” rather than the expectation that we have to be “happy” all of the time. It is ok that our emotional wellbeing varies frequently according to what is going on in our lives at that time.

Maintaining and keeping good mental health and wellbeing is just as important as good physical wellbeing.

● **Mental Health Check-In:**

Try this “temperature” mental health check-in table regularly to see how your mental health is today and over time.

Feeling (0 Bad – 8 Brilliant)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Physical									
Emotional									
Mental									
Social									
Financial									
Professional									
Domestic									
Friends									
Relationships									

● **Mental Health Checklist:**

Have a read of this checklist and see how many of these apply to you:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get good quality sleep on the whole | <input type="checkbox"/> I have people I can trust, talk to and open up to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I spend time relaxing                 | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel satisfied in the work that I do            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel valued                         | <input type="checkbox"/> I like myself                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do things for my own enjoyment      | <input type="checkbox"/> I eat foods that nourish me & make me feel good   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I recognise what affects my mood      | <input type="checkbox"/> I keep as active as I can                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do things to help others            | <input type="checkbox"/> I make time to do things that I love              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a strong support network       | <input type="checkbox"/> I am confident in myself and my abilities         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I talk about my feelings              | <input type="checkbox"/> I ask for help when I need it                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am kind to myself                   | <input type="checkbox"/> I accept myself                                   |

If you weren't able to tick many of these statements (and even if you did) let's look at ways that we can build (or maintain) our mental health!

● **Self-care!**

Self-care is a widely used term but how many of us practise it daily? Did you take time today (even 5 minutes) to dedicate to yourself and looking after your mental health?

Many of us fit in a workout, but how many of us practise using the muscles to exercise self-care?

Here are the muscles you can work out to help improve your mental health!

◇ **Talk about your feelings.**

Let us start with the area that can send many of us immediately running in the opposite direction... talking about how we feel.

Talking about how you are feeling is not a sign of weakness. Talking about your feelings is taking ownership and responsibility for your own mental health and empowers us to recognise any areas in our lives that may be causing us stress. This allows us to identify those areas and allows us to either come up with a plan to deal with it or it provides us with a regular outlet to release that stress.

Identify someone you feel you can trust. Someone else who you can talk to, who you know will listen, be supportive and understanding. Someone you can be yourself around and open up to without judgement.

Your family or friends or trusted colleagues may be able to offer you practical support and advice and give you another perspective. Even if others can't help practically, even talking about it can offer you peace of mind in that moment.

If you find it difficult to open up to others, maybe try opening up during a sporting activity together or a walk or simply blurting it out so you don't spend too long procrastinating about opening up. Often the fear of doing it is far worse than actually doing it. Feel the fear and do it anyway.

If you find it difficult opening up in person, why not try journaling about your feelings? Even if you don't share your journal with others, it can feel a great release to write down your feelings, thoughts or worries and get them down on paper and out of your head.

It can give you some much needed space from any problems you feel you are facing and you can return to it after a breather when you feel ready. It is also good to look back at to see how far you've come because it is easy for us to forget how much progress we make.

Things to try for talking about your feelings:

- Meet up with someone you trust
- Meet up for a brew and ask their thoughts
- Just blurt it out
- Once written down, show a friend
- Open up to different people about different things
- Try a support group
- Go for a walk together
- Go for a cycle together
- Write down how you feel
- Start a feelings journal
- Use an online support service/online chat
- Use a support helpline

If you don't feel able to speak to someone in your life about how you're feeling, why not write down how you are feeling and book an appointment with your GP and take your notes with you to show them? Or why not try these specific places for you, for support?

#### Emergency Services:



Mind's Blue Light Infoline offers confidential support for Team 999. It provides helpful information on mental health, advice and signposting to local support services with trained advisors offering understanding. The infoline is for emergency services staff, volunteers and their families. The phonelines are open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays) local rates apply.

You can email: [bluelightinfo@mind.org.uk](mailto:bluelightinfo@mind.org.uk) or text 84999

Find out more at: [www.mind.org.uk/bluelightinfoline](http://www.mind.org.uk/bluelightinfoline)

#### Armed Forces:

Combat Stress for veteran's mental health. If you have served or are currently serving in the UK Armed Forces you can call the Combat Stress' 24-hour mental health helplines. A team of specially trained professionals are available day and night to provide free confidential advice and support. If you're having a tough time, having trouble sleeping, experiencing flashbacks, feeling depressed or

anxious or just feeling something isn't quite right. The helpline is available 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

If you're a family member or carer worried about the mental health of a loved one or need to talk to someone yourself, you can call the helpline too.

Veterans and their families can call: 0800 138 1619

You can also text on: 07537 173 683 and email: [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)

Standard charges may apply for texts.

Serving personnel and their families can call: 0800 323 4444

#### **No Duff UK:**

No Duff UK help those whose mental health has been affected by their service in the Military, Emergency Services, HMP, Hospital, Veterinary or Animal Rescue Services, drawing on each other's service and skills (for both those serving and retired alike).

Members of the Armed Forces Covenant.

24 Hour Helpline: 07944440356

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/352018052306848>

Website: <https://www.no-duff.com/>

#### **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM):**

The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is a leading movement against suicide. Every week 125 people in the UK take their own lives and 75% of all UK suicides are male. CALM exists to aim to change this.

Call the CALM Helpline: 0800 58 58 58

Open 5pm – Midnight 365 days a year.

You can also use their webchat which is open 5pm – Midnight 365 days a year.

Link to webchat: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/>

#### **MindOut:**

MindOut is a LGBTQ mental health service. MindOut has an online support service which offers an instant message service that is confidential, non-judgemental and anonymous. Open most evenings from 5.30pm – 7.30pm and on Sundays from 2pm – 4pm with additional hours most days. The support service is run by online support workers and mental health advocates who are ready to provide emotional support, information or signpost.

<https://mindout.org.uk/get-support/mindout-online/>

#### **Mental Health at Work: Our Front Line.**

Our Frontline provides 24/7 emotional support by call or text with trained volunteers, or online resources, to all the workers who have been on the frontline throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. If

you work in social care, health, emergency services, an educator or any other essential worker please have a look at all of the resources available:

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/ourfrontline/>

You can text “SHOUT” to 85258, anytime, day or night, which will start a conversation with a trained SHOUT volunteer who will text you back and forth. Shout’s volunteers will work with you to take your next steps towards feeling better.

**Immediate help required:**

If you need urgent help with your mental health or you feel suicidal or like you want to harm yourself, please call 999 in an emergency or attend your local Accident and Emergency Department.

You can call the Samaritans on 116 123. They are available to offer support 24/7 every single day of the year.

**Stay as active as you can.**

Another way you can take care of yourself is to try to stay active on a regular basis. It is best to find an activity you genuinely enjoy and you feel good doing as you are more likely to stick to doing it and it’ll make you feel good about yourself!

You have already joined the Blue Light Cycling Club! That is brilliant!!

As an added boost to keeping yourself active you are surrounding yourself with other like-minded people who will encourage you and keep you motivated.

Keeping your body moving regularly will boost your self-esteem, make you feel more confident in yourself; how you feel and how you look and can help you feel stronger, concentrate and focus more and sleep better.

It is great to try a variety of exercise or activities to keep you active so that way you can find something you enjoy, something you feel good at or a way to spend time with others in a positive way!

**Ideas for you:**

Country walk	Tap dancing	Weight-lifting
Ballet	Tennis	Walk for 10 minutes on your lunch break
Zumba	A short run	Cycling in a group BLUE LIGHT CC
Swimming	Beach walk	Rock-climbing/ Indoor climbing
Hiking in a group	Spinning	Yoga
Pilates	Badminton	Kayaking
Hockey	A game of football with colleagues	Rugby
Power walk for five minutes	Archery	Try a workout DVD

Try making physical exercise that you enjoy part of your routine during the week. If you work in an office for example, getting outside for some fresh air and to have a walk each day for example on a lunch break, will help boost your mood and up your steps for the day!

Why not try looking online for local walking groups to spend time with others as well as boosting your mood?

<b>How many days a week do you do a physical activity? For example, a workout, a walk.</b>
<b>Do you enjoy the physical activity you do? If so – great! Keep it up! If not, what could you try/ what, for example from the list of ideas?</b>

[◇ Accept and Value yourself and do things that you are good at.](#)

Self-acceptance is a concept that is easier said than done. Putting your needs at the centre of your wellbeing is essential. Remember the principle of first aid that you cannot help others if you become a casualty yourself. The same applies for relationships, how can you love someone else healthily if your relationship with yourself isn't healthy?

Knowing yourself, your strengths and areas you want to improve, is a great way to make sure we look after ourselves. Looking after yourself can feel difficult when your mental health isn't feeling at its best which is why it is so important to ensure you value yourself day to day.

Remember to appreciate and celebrate your achievements and what you are good at. It is a great idea to remind yourself of this by keeping a journal, write down positives about yourself or your day, positive affirmations, things you are proud of or why not create an inspiration board with positive quotes or photos that make you smile?

Feeling good within yourself helps boost your self-esteem – do things that you enjoy, try a new workout class you've always wanted to try, take that solo trip away you've always wanted to go on, book that massage, go to watch the sports you enjoy – do the things you love and do them regularly.

<b>Do you do something you love – just for you – everyday?</b>	<b>If not – what self-care would you love to do more of?</b>
	<b>Ideas</b> – use a facemask, play sports you enjoy, go for a walk, have a massage, go for coffee with a friend, take a trip, watch your favourite tv show/ comedy, go to see a film.

**Self-care diary for this week –**

Write down one thing you can do each day to boost your self-esteem.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

**◊ Take time out.**

We work long hours and in sometimes incredibly stressful roles. It is absolutely crucial that you take time away from work. It is a good idea to space out time off from work, for example, at intervals throughout the year. A change of scenery can be as good as a rest. Planning, the excitement of the process of planning and actually taking small trips or days out can give you a lot of enjoyment too.

Not every day is positive but you can find small positives during each day.

**Ideas to boost your mood and take time out for \*you\*:**

Listen to a podcast you enjoy on your commute	Go to see your favourite sports team play	Try a new book	Have a warm drink that you love	Spend time in nature or with animals
Go for a massage	Enjoy a bubble bath with relaxing scents	Don't check your work digital devices	Play a mindfulness relaxation video	Enjoy a walk on the beach
Have a walk in the woods	Go for a spa day or treatment	Use some scented sticks or candles	Go for a spa day or treatment	Have an early night or lie in or a day off
Meditate for ten minutes	Do some yoga stretches	Enjoy a 10 minute walk on your lunch break	Try some square breathing	Do some gardening

**◊ Care for others.**

Caring for others is an important part of maintaining good relationships. In the Blue Light Cycling Club, you are already in a profession where you spend a great deal of your time looking after others. In jobs and at home, you can make a conscious choice to be there for others – to engage, to listen, to make others laugh and smile and by doing this, we help ourselves by helping others.

Being part of a team and making ourselves and others feel valued it makes us feel needed and good about ourselves. Volunteering can help us to loose ourselves in a rewarding activity.

Taking the time to send a text to a friend you haven't spoken to in a while or going for a coffee with someone you value can make you both feel great in yourselves. Caring for others can help us feel soothed with things on our mind but caring responsibilities or compassion fatigue can also be incredibly draining. If you spend a great deal of your time caring for others, make sure you are spending enough time prioritising yourself and your self-care.

◇ Remember that it is ok not to do it all.

We all try our best to prioritise, completing to-do lists and going out of our way to get tasks, errands and work tasks done. It is excellent to have that drive to get things done, but remember, you are a human being and it is ok not to get everything done.

You don't need to compare yourself to others in looks, "achievements", weight or any other measurable. Success is what we define it as and we are all unique with our own strengths and own areas we want to improve. It is what makes us and what makes life beautiful.

Practise "letting go" - instead of "checking in" with your work or tasks on days off or after work, turning off your devices completely.

When you are with your family or friends, check in with yourself and make sure you are "present" in the moment. Enjoy the breeze on your face. Relax and time your breaths slowly in and out.

You can work smarter, not harder. There are no prizes for burning out.

Remember, that taking care of your mental health and wellbeing is absolutely essential to your overall wellbeing. Work on fitting in self-care into your day to day routine. Don't wait until your tank is running on empty. If you do feel like you are running on empty, please reach out, have a look at the support available for you to use in this booklet and try the ideas in this booklet.

**& Happy cycling!**

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