



Employee
Assistance
Programme



vita
health group

EAP Newsletter

The power of talking edition

Issue 26

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Making People Better

The power of talking edition

In this month's newsletter we talk about children's mental health, how to get the most out of a therapy session, how to cope if you're triggered by Valentine's Day, and managing mental health through cancer.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

How to help your child or young person with their mental health

Children and young people's mental health has never been so important. NHS data shows that **18% of children** aged seven to 16 years and **more than a fifth** of young people aged 17 to 24 years, had a probable mental disorder*.

Worryingly, **83% of young people** with mental health needs agreed that the Covid-19 pandemic had made their mental health worse**.



This year, the theme of Place2Be's official Children's Mental Health Week - which will take place from 5-11 February - is My Voice Matters. Place2Be is encouraging children and young people to use their voices and share what matters to them.

Our mental health experts here at Vita Health Group have created a short guide to help parents and caregivers understand more about how they can help their children and young people manage their mental health.

*NHS Digital: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England - wave 3 follow up to the 2017 survey.

**YoungMinds (summer 2020) Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs (survey two).

Common warning signs of mental health issues in children and young people

It can be difficult to spot when a child needs support with mental health issues. And it can be tricky for young people to speak out about the challenges they're facing.

So it's really important that parents, caregivers and family members are able to recognise the signs that a child or young person may be struggling with their mental health, and that they know ways to help them talk.



Warning signs of mental health issues:



Withdrawal – no longer doing the things they used to enjoy



Significant changes in behaviour and mood



Self-harming



Changes to sleeping patterns



Unexplained physical changes such as weight loss or weight gain



Sudden, negative change in academic performance



Isolation and withdrawal from social situations



Refusal to attend school.

How to help a child talk about their mental health

Talking isn't always easy, but giving children and young people the space and opportunity to open up is one of the most helpful things we can do to support their wellbeing.

It's sometimes helpful for children and young people to talk whilst they are doing an activity. This can take the pressure off the child needing to make eye contact and makes the conversation feel much more natural and relaxed. Here are some activities you could try:



Cooking or baking



Playing football



Going for a walk



Being creative - drawing, painting or arts and crafts

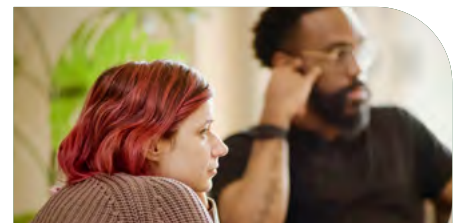


Going for a drive together.

If you're trying to discuss a tricky subject with a child or young person, we suggest parents and caregivers follow these general principles:



Help them to feel safe and comfortable



Show that you're listening and hearing what they're saying



Allow them to set their own pace and be patient



Avoid displaying strong emotions and stay neutral



Stick to facts - it's okay if you don't know the answer, be honest.



What type of mental health support is available for children and young people?

When children and young people are struggling, it's important they understand that they are not alone. There are many organisations and services now widely available that can offer support, therapy and information for children and young people, as well as families and caregivers.

Here are a number of treatment and support options that are available for the children and young people in your family:

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a form of talking therapy which is evidence based, meaning it has a wide range of evidence showing its effectiveness for many people of different ages and different problems.

CBT helps children and young people make sense of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This is achieved by helping them to understand and recognise their unhelpful thoughts or behaviours, and learning how to replace them with more realistic thoughts.

It enables a child or young person to discover new ways of looking at situations, and encourages them to learn how to respond differently to cope at a difficult or stressful time. CBT is mostly used for mild to moderate mental health problems, such as, anxiety, low mood, or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

Counselling

Counselling is a form of talking therapy that can help children and young people make sense of the difficult things they're experiencing in life. Counselling can offer both short and long term support, with a counsellor using various techniques and approaches to help children and young people find ways of coping with the difficulties.

Counsellors tend to take a creative approach to working with children and young people. Sessions also provide a confidential and safe space for children and young people to talk openly about a range of issues that are troubling them, such as relationships, bullying, social and emotional problems, and parental separation.

Art, music and play therapy

By using creative resources, therapists can help children and young people to express difficult and big feelings. Therapists are able to help children navigate safe ways of exploring emotions and enable them to understand what's going on. These types of therapies are sometimes available in schools but are mostly accessible privately.

Where can you access support as a parent or caregiver?

MindEd

www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk

MindEd is a free learning resource about the mental health of children, young people and older adults.

Action for Children

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Parent Talk is Action for Children's online advice hub. Browse expert articles on common parenting questions - from potty training to emotional wellbeing. Or use its live chat to connect directly to a qualified parenting coach. It's all free, and no topic is too big, small, or embarrassing.

Anna Freud

www.annafreud.org

Anna Freud is a mental health charity for children and families. The charity offers advice and guidance for parents and carers to help them support a child or young person experiencing poor mental health or wellbeing.



How to get the most out of therapy



How to get the most out of therapy

It's normal to feel anxious about starting something new, and that's no different when it comes to therapy. To help put your mind at ease, our mental health experts have shared eight important points to know about therapy and top tips to get the most out of your session.



1/ Therapy is a safe space - you will not be judged or shamed

It's important to remember that in therapy you're talking to a neutral professional. They are not there to judge or shame you, instead they are there to help you understand thought patterns and equip you with the tools you need to help you reach your goals.



2/ Define what you want to work towards

The best way to approach therapy is to know exactly what you want to work towards. Ask yourself these questions: What am I missing? What's wrong? What would a happier me do differently? If I woke up and all these problems were gone, what would be different? Write your answers down ahead of your session.



3/ Make your goals specific

When you're defining your goal, make it a SMART goal. Ones that are:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-Bound



4/ Engage in the homework tasks set by your therapist

CBT and many other types of therapy are all about change (behavioural change and changes in our thoughts). Sadly you will never see a change in your mood if you don't attempt, or are unwilling, to implement change.



5/ Ask questions

It's okay to be confused or not understand something right away. Skills are learned through trial and error - rarely does someone pick something up perfectly the first time. Making mistakes is a big part of life and it's the best way we learn. If you're unsure, ask questions.



6/ Be consistent in your attendance of sessions

Therapy is a journey that happens over many weeks, months or years and results don't come from a click of the fingers. In time, you'll see the benefit of being consistent with your sessions.



7/ Be honest and open

It may sound obvious, but it's really important to allow yourself to be honest and speak the truth about how you're feeling. When you express your true thoughts and feelings, your therapist will be better able to understand your experiences and provide effective support.



8/ Ensure your therapist is the right fit for you

For therapy to be effective and meaningful, it's really important to have a good connection and relationship with your therapist. If the relationship doesn't feel right for you, that's ok - you are not obliged to continue working with that therapist. Know that you have the choice to work with someone else. Therapists will value the feedback you give them and can sometimes recommend another professional that might be a better fit for you.

How to cope if you struggle with Valentine's Day



Five tips to help you fend off difficult feelings this Valentine's Day

Feeling down or lonely on Valentine's Day is much more common than you might think. People can find the day triggering for many reasons; they may be going through a break-up, mourning the loss of a friend or family member, or have underlying mental health challenges.

One of the issues is that since our school years, many of us have been conditioned to have a high expectation of Valentine's Day - one where we're showered with love, adoring messages and gifts. But for most people, the reality is very different.

Plus, if things aren't going as smoothly as you'd like in your life, Valentine's Day can feel like a reminder of disappointments and uncertainties, and compound existing negative thoughts.

Our mental health experts here at Vita Health Group have shared five tips to help you fend off difficult feelings this Valentine's Day.



1. Stick to your normal routine

Try not to let the fact that it's Valentine's Day overtake your week and disrupt your routine. Chances are, if you carry on as normal and don't allow yourself to dwell on the day, you likely won't even notice it's come and gone. Remember, it's just another day.



2. Restrict your social media use

You may find that images and videos of loved-up people on social media are triggering to you. Scrolling through social feeds on Valentine's Day can send some people into a downward spiral. Restrict your use of social media or make a commitment to yourself to stay off it altogether.



3. Give love to friends and family

Connecting with others on Valentine's Day doesn't always have to involve romance. Squash the misconception that Valentine's Day is exclusively for lovers. Instead, arrange a date with friends, join a group exercise session, host a night in at yours for your friends and their families, or arrange a video call with a grandparent. Think of others in your network who might benefit from talking and company on this particular day.



4. Be your own Valentine

If you know that you might struggle with Valentine's Day this year, think ahead and plan a day or evening full of all the things you love to do. If you enjoy exercise, book onto your favourite class or schedule a walk outdoors, or if you have a favourite coffee shop, make sure you pop in and get your drink of choice. Yes it's good to shower people around you with love, but it's equally as important to give it to ourselves too.



5. Get professional help

There is no shame in feeling triggered by Valentine's Day. It's a day wrapped in big emotions and it's completely natural to find it difficult. If you do feel overwhelmed by your feelings during this time, particularly to the extent that they interrupt your day-to-day activities, reach out for professional help. Talking therapies can help you to navigate your feelings and equip you with the tools you need to manage difficult emotions.

Mental health and cancer

The impact of having cancer does not always end when treatment ends. For many people, the long-term consequences of cancer and treatment include both physical and mental health effects.

With World Cancer Day taking place on Sunday 4 February, we think it's important to raise awareness of some of the lesser known impacts of cancer and share tips on how you can manage mental health through this tough time



Three lesser known impacts of cancer



1/ Changes to sexual wellbeing

Cancer and cancer treatment may cause physical and emotional changes that impact an individual's sex life. As people recover, they may find that their sex life goes back to the way it was. But others find they have to adjust to changes that last longer or that may be permanent.



2/ Financial pressure

A cancer diagnosis can change the financial situation of both the patient and their family. Although not always the case, a cancer diagnosis may mean you need to stop working. It can also mean spending more money on things such as hospital parking, household bills, or childcare.



3/ Trouble sleeping

Many people affected by cancer find they have trouble sleeping. That could be difficulty in getting to sleep, waking up during the night or much earlier than usual, or needing to sleep in the day due to fatigue.

How to manage mental health through cancer

A cancer diagnosis can affect the emotional health of patients and their families. Cancer can be a life-changing experience that triggers a whole host of emotions including anxiety, depression, and distress.

Our mental health experts have shared their advice on managing mental health through cancer. They may not all be useful to you or your family's situation, but they are worth considering:



1/ Be aware of your mental health needs

Acknowledging how cancer can impact your mental health can help you to take control of your emotions. Whatever your response is, know that it is entirely normal and your feelings are valid. Try to avoid habits that will worsen your mental health, for example drinking alcohol, overworking, taking drugs or having late nights.



2/ Talk

The focus of cancer is often on physical symptoms not the emotional ones. Although healthcare professionals may not ask you about your mental health, they are trained for these discussions and can help signpost you to the right support. So, if you feel able, bring up mental health during appointments. If you have an existing mental health problem, discuss it with your cancer team early on.



3/ Get professional support early on

Counselling and talking therapies provide a safe space to discuss your feelings and emotions. Support groups for your cancer type can also give practical and emotional support to you. You might not know what kind of support you need at the moment, and that's OK. The mental health charity, Mind, has more information on the support options available www.mind.org.uk

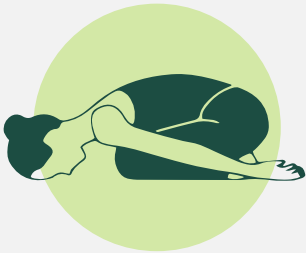
Our tip of the month

The one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

Integrate stretching and yoga poses into your morning routine.

Embedding some simple stretches into your morning routine can help to prepare your body and energise you for the day ahead. We know mornings can be very busy, but even a quick 10-minute routine can make a huge difference to both your mind and body.

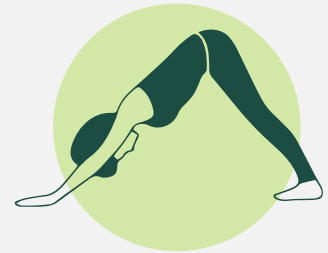
Here are six simple yoga poses and stretches that can help to invigorate your morning routine:



Child's Pose



Cat-Cow



Downward-Facing Dog



One-Legged Dog



Warrior 1



Standing Forward Bend

SilverCloud Programmes on the Wellbeing Hub

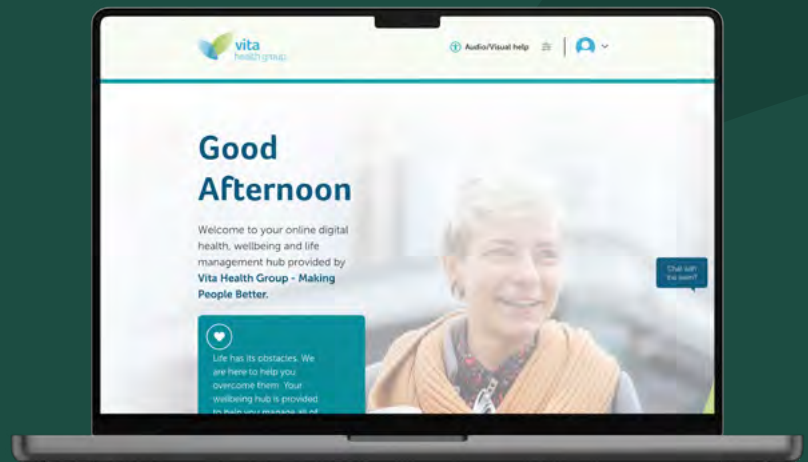


Visit our Wellbeing Hub by scanning the QR code above:

A new way to a healthier mind

1 in 4 of us struggle with mental health challenges, like feeling low or anxious.

SilverCloud programmes provide the tools and skills to feel better and stay better, helping you to improve and maintain your wellbeing by addressing underlying issues that can have a negative impact on how you would like to live your life.



What programmes are available?

Wellbeing

Programmes that give you the skills to deal with everyday issues that affect your emotional health.

Mental Health

Programmes to help alleviate the symptoms of common mental health conditions.

Chronic Health

Programmes that focus on the mental health aspects of living with a long term condition.

New programmes

- Space from Anxiety
- Bipolar toolkit

Based on years of clinical research, the programmes are interactive and delivered via a user-friendly platform. Programme modules are easy to use. Work through the activities, videos and content anytime on your computer, tablet, or phone.

Visit your Wellbeing Hub

Digital Wellbeing Programmes, free and in confidence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use your organisational code to access the site.

www.my-eap.com/access

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