

Support with Emotional Wellbeing

What is emotional wellbeing?

Emotional wellbeing is your ability to understand the value of your emotions and use them to move your life forward in positive directions.

A useful definition of emotional wellbeing is offered by the Mental Health Foundation: 'A positive sense of wellbeing which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life; people in good mental health have the ability to recover effectively from illness, change or misfortune.'



Our disabilities and our upbringing and past experiences may have had a negative impact on our emotional wellbeing. Experiences such as living in residential care, inadequate housing, bad educational or medical experiences, economic disadvantage, illness, bullying, abuse or bereavement can all impact on our wellbeing. Any of these factors can have a profound impact on our self-esteem. We know that half of the 350 beneficiaries who responded to the Firefly Survey carried out in 2015 reported that they were “currently experiencing or had recently experienced depression and/or anxiety”.

Everyday emotional wellbeing also involves identifying, building upon, and operating from your strengths rather than focusing on fixing problems or weaknesses. The better you are able to master your emotions, the greater your capacity to enjoy life, cope with stress, and focus on important personal priorities.

What kind of benefits can you expect?

Some benefits of gaining greater emotional wellbeing include knowing that your needs are important and that you deserve to have a life where you feel happy and secure. As you achieve emotional balance, you are able to identify your heart's desires, take positive action, and make changes in your life.

With emotional well-being, you can experience:

- Healing – from stress, anxiety, depression, grief, and other issues

- Change – to transform unhelpful patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving
- Self-confidence – as you gain trust and belief in yourself
- Growth – to live more authentically.

How do we improve our emotional wellbeing?

How do we make ourselves emotionally strong? Preventative approaches are much better than intervention after a problem has emerged. Focussing on 'emotional resilience' will be helpful.

The key to a happy and healthy life

Emotional health has many aspects. Put simply, it is based on self-esteem - how you feel about yourself - and behaviour that is appropriate and healthy. Someone who is emotionally healthy:

- Understands and adapts to change
- Copes with stress
- Has a positive self-image
- Has the ability to love and care for others
- Can act independently to meet his or her own needs

Everyone, including people who are emotionally healthy, has problems. Emotionally healthy people are able to adjust to and solve problems, and in doing so they help others as well as themselves to get satisfaction out of life.

What support is there to help me gain emotional wellbeing?

Psychology - is the scientific study of people, the mind and behaviour. Tackling depression without drugs is possible. Many GP surgeries across the country prescribe exercise as a treatment for a range of conditions, including depression.

MoodGYM - is a self help programme designed to teach cognitive behavioural therapy skills to people vulnerable to anxiety and depression. It was designed and developed by staff at the Centre for Mental Health Research at the Australian National University, in collaboration with other researchers, mental health experts, web and graphic designers, and software engineers.

Website: <http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>

Talking therapies - can help all sorts of people in lots of different situations. You may also hear them referred to as talking treatments or psychological therapies.

Talking therapy is for anyone who's going through a bad time or has emotional problems they can't sort out on their own. For many adults, they may be the same or more effective than medication.

You may be able to get a talking therapy on the NHS in your area. You're most likely to be referred for counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT helps you understand how your feelings affect your thoughts and behaviour.

Your GP can refer you, or sometimes you can refer yourself to your local psychological therapies team. You may have to wait a few weeks for it to start and may not have much choice in who you see.

Sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger than to relatives or friends. During talking therapy, a trained counsellor or therapist listens to you and helps you find your own answers to problems, without judging you.

The therapist will give you time to talk, cry, shout or just think. It's an opportunity to look at your problems in a different way with someone who will respect you and your opinions.

Usually, you'll talk one-to-one with the therapist. Sometimes talking treatments are held in groups or couples, such as relationship counselling.

Although there are lots of different types of talking therapy, they all have a similar aim: to help you feel better. Some people say that talking therapies don't make their problems go away, but they find it easier to cope with them and feel happier.

Talking therapy for mental health problems

Talking therapies can help if you have:

- depression
- anxiety
- an eating disorder
- a phobia
- an addiction

They're often used if you've been diagnosed with a serious mental health condition, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Talking therapies are commonly used alongside medicines.

Talking therapy after difficult life events

If you're going through a sad and upsetting time, talking therapies can help you deal with it. This could be after a relative or friend has died, after finding out you have a serious illness, if you're struggling with infertility, or if you've lost your job.

Physical illness and talking therapy

People with long-term health conditions are more vulnerable to depression, and talking therapies have been proven to help.

Talking therapies may improve your quality of life if you have:

- diabetes
- multiple sclerosis
- heart disease
- a stroke

Exercise on prescription – Exercise can help to deal with stress, anxiety or depression. If you haven't exercised for a long time or are concerned about the effects of exercise on your health, ask your GP about the exercise on prescription programme.

Your GP will refer you to a local active health team for a fixed number of sessions under the supervision of a qualified trainer.

You decide with your GP and the active health team what type of activity will suit you. Depending on your circumstances and what's available locally, the exercise programme may be offered free or at a reduced cost.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Exercise-for-depression.aspx>

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) Some beneficiaries have found this helpful and it is recommended on the NHS web site. <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

CBT has been shown to be particularly helpful at tackling problems such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders and drug misuse.

Unlike other types of talking treatments, such as psychotherapy, CBT deals with your current problems, rather than focusing on issues from your past. It looks for practical ways to improve your state of mind on a daily basis.

CBT can also be used to treat people with long-term health conditions, such as arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). CBT cannot cure the physical symptoms of these health conditions, but can help people cope better with them.

The British Psychological Society is the representative body for psychology and psychologists in the UK. **The British Psychological Society** <http://www.bps.org.uk/>

Thalidomide Counsellor - If you would like to see a thalidomide counsellor, then Francesca Thorpe is able to provide a telephone counseling service. Francesca has been working as a counsellor since 1999. She has experience with counselling individuals, couples and adolescents. She undertakes time limited, or long-term therapy. Francesca has been involved with a telephone counselling pilot study with the Thalidomide Trust and has experience with counselling thalidomiders. The pilot was independently reviewed by the Trust and found to be of benefit. A separate leaflet is available from HealthLink at the Thalidomide Trust giving more information about the service and how to contact her.

Francesca lives in Woking, Surrey and can offer counselling to individuals face to face if they are able to travel to her home. If this is not possible then Francesca is also able to offer telephone counselling. Her charge is £45 per 50-minute session.

The information and advice presented in these pages was developed by beneficiaries and advisers as a result of their participation in the Fit for the Future event held in April 2016. It is based on the advice and experience of those living with Thalidomide damage and those who work alongside them.

It is always advisable to talk to your own GP before embarking on an exercise or diet regime. The Health & Wellbeing team at the Trust are also available to support you with all aspects of living well and can provide further information and advice based on your specific needs. Please don't hesitate to contact them on 01480 474074.