

# AWARE

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.  
CHANGING LIVES.**

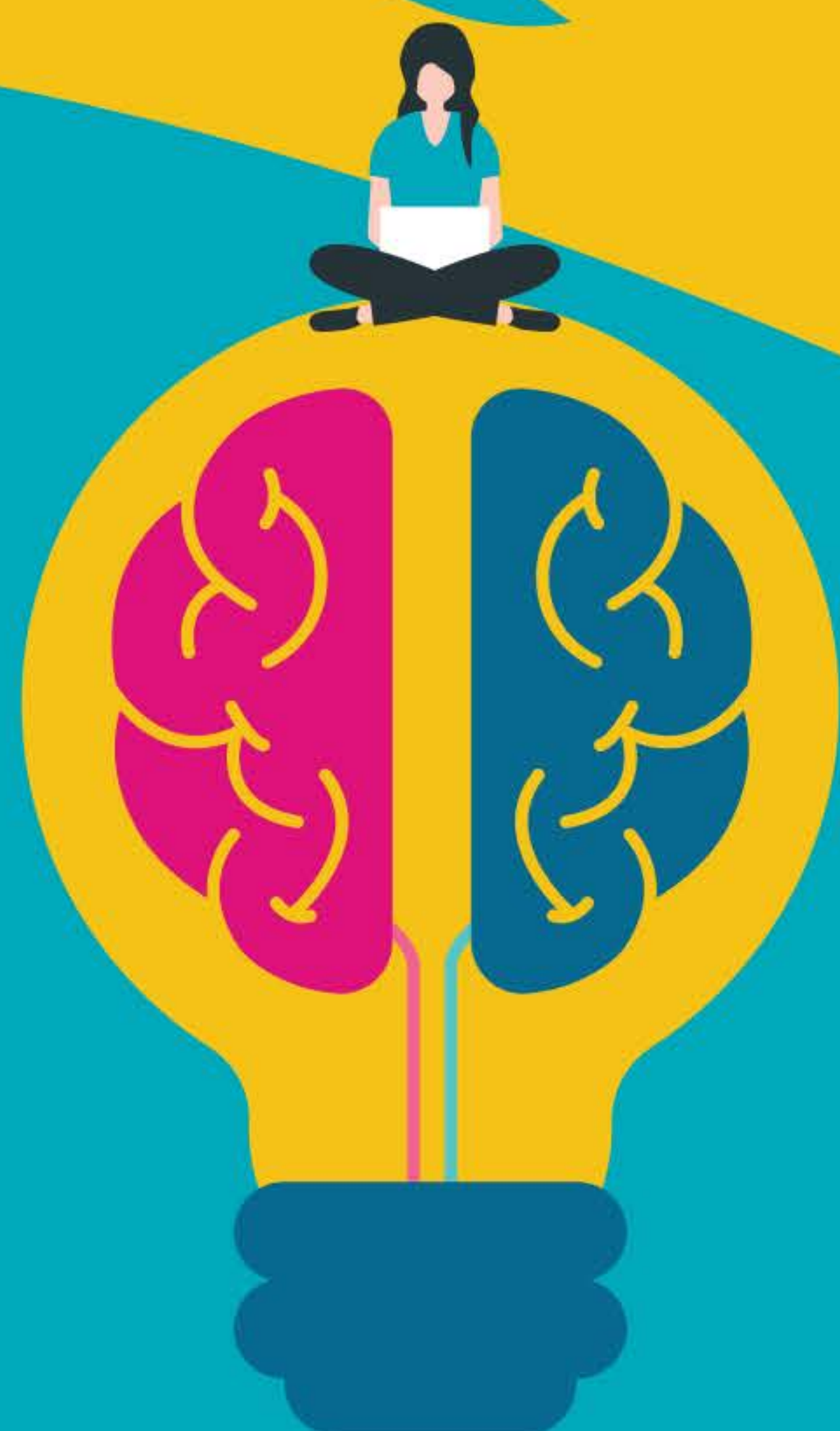
**LET'S TALK  
ABOUT...**

**YOUNG PEOPLE  
HELPING YOU WITH  
YOUR MENTAL  
HEALTH**

When you hear the words 'mental health', what do you think of? Maybe words like 'nuts' or 'crazy' come to mind? There's probably a lot of people who think the same.

But the word 'mental' simply means to do with your mind.

[AWARE-ni.org](http://AWARE-ni.org)





# Young People and Mental Health

## Mental Health is About How Healthy Your Mind is

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It's about your thoughts, moods, and how you deal with the 'ups and downs' of life. Good mental health doesn't mean you're in a good mood all the time; that's impossible. It means you enjoy good times, cope with bad times and bounce back afterwards.



## Mood matters!

It's normal to have good moods, like when you're going to watch your team play, see a gig, or just spend time with your friends. Also you can have bad moods, like when you have too much homework, you have an argument with a friend, or you break up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. So your mood can, and will change often depending on what's happening to you at the time.



## Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours

Be aware of all of these. What you're thinking, how you feel, and how you act when things like this happen.

You might think that you aren't good enough, you might feel angry or sad, you may stop going out and spending time with people, and you might cry a lot, or lash out and fight with others.

If you're experiencing these thoughts, emotions and behaviours, your mood will probably get worse, and you risk hurting people you care about, and losing friends.

What would help more, is staying away from negative thoughts and actions, Realise that even though you are going through something difficult, you are strong, and able to get through it.

Be positive and do something you enjoy. Spend time with your friends and talk to someone you trust about how you're feeling.

Sometimes by talking to people you trust, getting the right support, and trying out some of the self-help tips at the end of this guide, you'll get through difficult times and feel better again.

**If you're feeling very low, it may be depression**

**If the sadness and bad moods:**

- Last a long time (a few weeks or more)
- Are more than you can cope with
- Affect your daily life and relationships it might be depression.



## Here's two young people's thoughts on depression:

"I didn't feel right... I was so sad all the time. I found school really difficult. It was difficult to talk to people and I lost my confidence."

"At the minute I feel lost, lonely and can't see that changing for me? I feel like I'm drifting, I drifted through my exams and I'm still drifting."

Often, you can become depressed but don't even realise what is happening. Depression is very common, especially among teenagers.

In fact half of all teenagers feel stressed most of the time. But with the right help and support with depression, you will get better.

## How do I know if I have depression?

Depression affects your thoughts, feelings (emotions), your body (physical symptoms) and your behaviour.

- You might think "I'm useless, nothing ever goes right, life isn't worth living".
- You might feel unhappy, worried, guilty, and angry.
- Your body may get aches & pains, tired, restless. You might gain or lose weight, or have trouble sleeping.
- Your behaviours might include crying, staying in, forgetting things, eating more or less, hurting yourself deliberately, or taking alcohol or drugs.



## Why do we get depression?



**Heredity:** having a parent or close relative who has had depression may increase your risk.



**Life events and experiences:** If you have past issues like bereavement, abuse, bullying, job loss, relationship break-up, or divorce.



**Environment:** actors like poor housing, money worries, stress, relationship problems, physical illness, or loneliness.



**Personality:** if you have a more sensitive personality or you have perfectionist tendencies, you are more vulnerable to depression.



**But remember, It's not what happens to us but how we deal with it that matters.**

## What helps for depression?

**If you feel you are depressed, talk to someone. No matter how difficult it might be, talk to someone who can help; an adult you trust and who won't judge you. Talk with your friends, they may understand more than you think.**

**If you can't talk face to face:**

**Call Childline free on 08001111 or go online.  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

Childline is free and totally confidential. You can talk to them about anything at any time. You don't even have to give your name if you don't want to.

**Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.**

Lifeline is a telephone help and counseling service for anyone in distress. It is available 24/7 and is free to call on mobile.

**Call Samaritans free, day or night on 116 123**

You can talk to a Samaritan at any time, day or night, by calling 116123 free. You can also speak to them by sending an email or writing a letter. Sometimes writing about your feelings can help work through what's on your mind, especially if it's upsetting to talk about them.

## What else helps for depression?

Allow time for fun and relaxation. Do something you enjoy, something you're good at. Achieving or improving on something boosts our self-confidence. Learn the facts. Reading this guide is a good first step. Take the next one, go and speak to your GP, they will tell you more, and then decide what help or treatment is right for you.

## Sometimes help will mean medication

Talking to someone, getting counseling, or making changes in your lifestyle may help. But, if you're feeling very low, you may need to take anti-depressants. These don't always work for younger people, or might make you feel a bit worse before you start to feel better. When they do work, they work well, but your GP will want to see you regularly while you are taking them.



## More important steps to take towards recovery

- Avoid alcohol or drugs.
- Exercise regularly, even a short walk, swimming or cycling can help.
- Keep a good sleep routine
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet





# The 5 most evidenced based steps to improving your mental health are:



**1. Be Active** - Exercise acts as an antidepressant. Research has shown that 50 minutes of brisk walking 4 times a week significantly reduces depression'.

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**2. Take Notice** - Savour the moment, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

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**3. Give** - Do something nice for a friend or stranger. Smile. Volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group.

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**4. Connect** - With the people around you. Family, friends, or neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

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**5. Keep learning** - Do not be afraid to try something new. Rediscover an old hobby or interest or simply set a challenge you will enjoy.

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## Do One Thing

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when taking steps to help yourself. But remember to focus on doing just one thing at a time. It will help you to reach the goals you set, and get a real sense of achievement.



# Who to contact for support



## Lifeline

Lifeline is a telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress or despair. It is available 24/7 and is free to call from your mobile phone.

They can give you immediate support, offer you a face-to-face appointment, or give you information about other services in your area. **Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.**

You could also

- See your doctor
- Call the out-of-hours GP service
- Go to the A&E department
- Call emergency services on 999
- Call Samaritans on their freephone helpline 116 123.

This is a confidential service that provides a listening ear to those in distress.

You can read our other guides for more information on help with depression, and looking after your mental health.

Find out how we can help and support you.  
Please visit our website or contact us:

Visit: [www.aware-ni.org.uk](http://www.aware-ni.org.uk)

Email: [info@aware-ni.org](mailto:info@aware-ni.org)

Call us: Belfast 028 9035 7820

Derry/L'Derry 028 7126 0602



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