



Be Prepared...
for new adventure!

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Introduction

Looking after your mental health is just as important as looking after your physical health, regardless of age. In the same way that you eat the right diet and take exercise to keep your body feeling good, you should also be taking care of yourself to keep your mind feeling good.

Mental health is a fundamental aspect of life and is closely linked to your physical state. A balanced diet, sufficient exercise and relaxation all contribute to a healthy mental state.

Nobody is 'up' all the time; it's normal to have 'down' days. However, it is much easier to maintain a healthy mental state to begin with than to correct a problem that occurs later.

If you're feeling low or stressed, it's nothing to be ashamed of, and should be openly discussed. It's a myth that a physical condition is automatically more serious than something like anxiety or depression.

Lots of people suffer from mental health problems at some point in their life. So even if you're feeling well in yourself, you may find that other people are not coping so well.

You interact with lots of people during the day, so you may notice that someone you are familiar with is not acting like they usually do. It might only be temporary, but it could also continue over a period of time.

Things you might notice

- They say negative things a lot
- It seems like they don't care about anyone else (or seem unreasonable)
- They are drinking alcohol a lot more often, or are drinking more heavily

- They start fights, say nasty things or are bad tempered
- They won't talk to you or other people as much
- They are ill more often, or have days off school or work sick
- They eat a very small amount or eat a lot (not a 'normal' amount)
- They seem tired all the time, or never seem to sleep.

Helpful tips

Ways you can help them are:

- Be understanding. Let them know that you care and show understanding.
- Listen. The more you know about the symptoms and issues, the more you can help them and understand what they are going through.
- Share feelings. It is important for everyone to share feelings. By talking about issues and emotions, you can uncover what works and what is not helpful to one another.
- Create a support system. Try not to take on caring for the person all by yourself. It's difficult and can affect your own wellbeing if you try to do it alone. Talk to other people about sharing responsibilities.
- Seek immediate help. If at any time the person talks about death or suicide or may be harmful to you or others, seek immediate help. Don't forget that adults in Scouting have a responsibility to follow the child protection policy.

What not to do

- Do not dismiss their feelings by saying things like 'snap out of it' or 'pull yourself together.'

- Do not force them to do things they do not feel they can, e.g. going out if they have anxiety. It might end up setting them back further.
- Try not to agree with negative views. Be realistic, but remind them that the situation will get better.

Getting help

There are many places you can look for information, for example in your local library, internet or other digital platforms.

If you're worried about anything, or just feeling like you're not yourself, there's always someone you can talk to.

Types of mental illness

OCD – Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour

According to the National OCD Foundation: 'Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a disorder of the brain and behaviour. OCD causes severe anxiety in those affected. OCD involves both obsessions and compulsions that take a lot of time and get in the way of important activities the person values'.

Activity one: Understanding OCD

For all ages

For many people with OCD, if they don't do a certain task right, they feel they have to do it all over again. In some cases, they do not tolerate imperfection in their lives and many tasks regarded as 'simple' involve repetition until they are satisfied. They are aware of the repetition but often cannot prevent it.

Make up a simple obstacle course such as:

- narrow walkways
- jumps
- passing through hoops
- target throwing (bean bags)
- balancing

Use your imagination to make it challenging but fun.

The object is to complete the course and record the finish time but there are strict conditions. Any mistakes mean restarting from

the very beginning. Each section has to be completed exactly right:

- Passing through a hoop – the hoop is not allowed to touch the body
- Bean bags – all three bean bags must be successfully thrown into a bucket

This can be made even more challenging by adding special moves in between obstacles (hopping or large steps).

The outcome of this exercise highlights the frustration felt from people with OCD.

Depression

If anyone has been experiencing several of the depression symptoms below for more than two weeks, they should call their doctor. If they have been thinking about death or suicide, they need help straight away.

People suffering depression might:

- feel miserable and sad almost everyday
- lose interest in most activities
- feel anxious or irritable
- have trouble concentrating or remembering
- feel tired
- feel guilty
- sleep too much or too little
- eat too much or too little
- have medically unexplained aches and pains
- be thinking of death or suicide

Schizophrenia

Views on schizophrenia have changed over the years. In general it is a condition where a person can't tell their own intense thoughts, ideas, perceptions and imaginings from reality.

In general though there are signs which are used to diagnose and treat schizophrenia in the same way.

In making a diagnosis, doctors have to be sure it is not something else, either a physical or a mental health problem. They will look for various 'positive' symptoms and 'negative' symptoms, and make a decision from there.

Positive symptoms

'Positive' symptoms are symptoms that most people do not normally experience. They include:

- strange thinking ('thought disorder')
- Thoughts and ideas may be jumbled and not make sense to other people. Conversation is difficult and the person is isolated.
- Hallucinations, which can affect any of the senses, i.e. they may hear, smell, taste or feel things that other people don't.
- Any voices may be a familiar person, or a stranger. The voices are often critical but can be friendly. It tends to be worse when the person is stressed. Note: people can hear voices without being schizophrenic.
- Delusions. Usually strongly held beliefs or experiences that are not in line with a generally accepted reality, and may be unusual or extreme. This may seem like paranoia.

Negative symptoms

'Negative' symptoms are a lack of some emotional responses or thoughts. 'Negative' symptoms are things like lack of interest, emotional flatness, inability to concentrate, wanting to avoid people or to be protected.

These are significant changes in behaviour which may happen quite suddenly or may occur more gradually. Schizophrenics can feel upset, anxious, confused and suspicious of other people, particularly anyone who doesn't agree with their perceptions. They may be unaware, or reluctant to believe, that they need help.

Social Anxiety

The fear of behaving in an embarrassing or humiliating way can make a person become withdrawn and avoid contact. They may avoid particular things, like public toilets, eating out etc. They might find themselves blushing, shaking and sweating etc.

Alzheimer's/Dementia

Look at the booklet 'The milk's in the oven'.

Activity suggestions are in this publication.

Bipolar disorder

When someone has bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, their mood can swing from high to low – euphoric to depressed.

In the high phase (also referred to as hypomania), someone with bipolar disorder may have huge amounts of energy and feel little need for sleep. They can think and talk faster than usual, and thoughts may jump rapidly from one subject to another, making conversation difficult.

They may have what are called 'grandiose' ideas or delusions about their abilities and powers, and a loss of judgment. People in a high phase can get themselves into all sorts of difficulties that they would normally avoid – they may leave their job, spend money they don't have, or give away all their possessions.

When they're feeling low, someone with bipolar disorder can feel hopeless, despairing and lethargic, become full of self-blame and self-doubt and have difficulty concentrating. This can make it difficult to cope with everyday life. They may want to withdraw from friends and social contacts, and may feel suicidal.

Cyclothymia, also called cyclothymic disorder, is a less intense version of bipolar disorder, with less extreme highs and lows that can still cause difficulties.

ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is the term used to describe three main kinds of behavioural problem in children:

- overactive behaviour (hyperactivity)
- impulsive behaviour
- difficulty in paying attention

Children with ADHD are not just very active; they also have a wide range of other problem behaviours that can make them very difficult to care for, manage and teach.

Anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders are those that are characterised by excessive and abnormal fear, worry and anxiety.

Types of anxiety disorders include:

- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Social anxiety disorder
- Phobias
- Panic disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Separation anxiety

Factitious disorders

These psychological disorders are those in which an individual acts as if he or she has an illness, often be deliberately faking or exaggerating symptoms or even self-inflicting damage to the body. Types of factitious disorders include:

- Munchausen syndrome
- Munchausen syndrome by proxy
- Ganser syndrome

Impulse-Control Disorders

Impulse control disorders are those that involve an inability to control impulses, resulting in harm to oneself or others.

Types of impulse-control disorders include:

- Kleptomania (stealing)
- Pyromania (fire-starting)
- Trichotillomania (hair-pulling)
- Pathological gambling
- Intermittent explosive disorder
- Dermatillomania (skin-picking)

Mental disorders due to a general medical condition

This type of psychological disorder is caused by an underlying medical condition. Medical conditions can cause psychological symptoms such as catatonia and personality changes. Examples of mental disorders due to a general medical condition include:

- Psychotic disorder due to epilepsy
- Depression caused by diabetes
- AIDS related psychosis
- Personality changes due to brain damage

Substance-related disorders

Substance-related disorders are those that involve the use and abuse of different substance, such as cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates and alcohol. These disorders can include dependence, abuse, psychosis, anxiety, intoxication, delirium and withdrawal that results from the use of various substances.

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