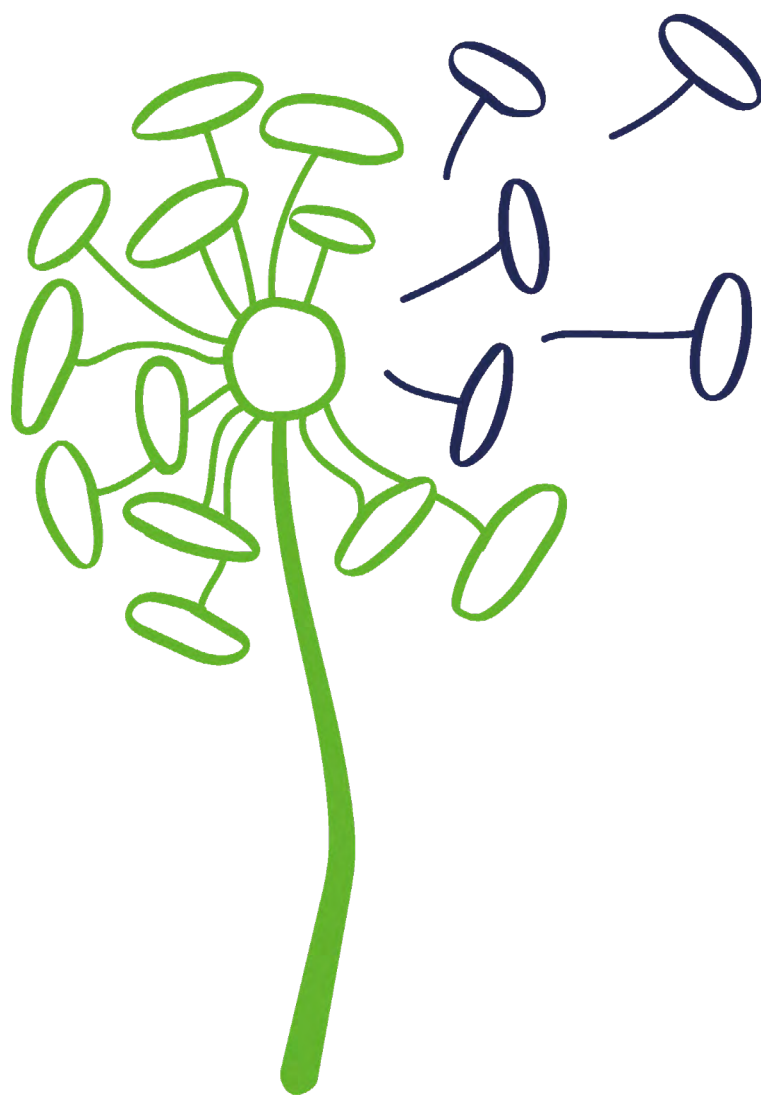


# While You Wait

A guide to help you stay well  
whilst you are waiting for a referral  
to mental health services in Sussex



Possability  
People

Waiting to start support, treatment or therapies for mental health conditions can be lengthy, with services stretched and oversubscribed. People might feel lost, with nowhere to turn when life feels tough. The Covid-19 pandemic has added to the strain on services which are receiving more referrals for conditions such as depression and anxiety.

This booklet was designed by Possability People, a Sussex charity which supports disabled people. The resources, ideas, strategies, and contacts in it are intended to help you manage your wellbeing so you can support yourself while you are waiting for a mental health service. It is an information guide only, and is not designed to replace support from a mental health professional or support service.

## Six ways to look after your mental health while you wait

### 1. Maintain a healthy routine

Although it can be hard to keep to routines when you're experiencing changes in your mental health, doing your best to stick to a healthy lifestyle can really make a difference. Routines help to keep us grounded and are strongly linked to increased mental wellbeing.



You don't need to fill your days with activities that are difficult to maintain. Take care of yourself, it can be hard to sleep when your mental health fluctuates, so try and rest when you can and take naps when you are able. Our appetite can also be affected, so try to eat something when you can, for now just go with whatever you fancy rather than worrying about 'good' or 'bad' foods. Keeping active can also help you to feel better, so try and do at least one thing a day, however small, like getting dressed, having a bath or shower or getting outdoors. It's important to remember that this is temporary, and you will get better, so it's OK to just do whatever you can right now.

### 2. Reach out to friends, family and acquaintances

Friendship and human connection are crucial to protecting our mental health. Our friends, family and acquaintances can help to keep us grounded. They can help us to get things in perspective and manage problems that life throws at us, be that in person, on the phone or via a text message or two. It can be important to let those around us know how we're feeling, what we are going through, or just have a friendly chat with them.



For some, the pandemic brought about feelings of isolation, but for many people with mental health conditions, social isolation may have pre-existed for several years.

If you don't feel you have anyone you can reach out to, you could look online for befriending services in your area who could arrange for someone to contact you on a regular basis. Organisations such as C.A.L.M (Campaign Against Living Miserably), now offer web-chat services as well as by phone.

### 3. Use free resources available

You may not be able to access direct or face-to-face support immediately, however, there are many free resources available which can give you the tools and strategies you need to help yourself in the meantime. These include websites, apps, podcasts, self-help books and short courses of self-guided online therapy. There are some examples and links for some of these in section 4 of this booklet.



## 4. Keep your mind active and stimulated

Managing your mental health can be about much more than dealing with how you are feeling and managing your symptoms. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for yourself is some form of distraction which keeps your mind active. Listening to music and podcasts, reading books, magazines or online articles can help you to keep your mind engaged without thinking too much about how you are feeling. Similarly, watching films, creative writing, making art, playing games or doing puzzles can be beneficial.



## 5. Prepare for your first appointment

If you've never had therapy or mental health support before, or not for a while, it can be helpful to find out how it might work and what to expect. If you are still waiting for a date for your first appointment, you may like to research the basics on therapy: what happens in your first session, what sort of questions the practitioner might ask, for example.



Some people find it useful to keep a diary of how they are feeling while they are waiting. This can be an effective way of getting some of your worries out of your head and onto a page for a clearer or different perspective. It can also give mental health practitioners an idea of how you've been feeling and how you've processed things, if you choose to share with them. They will not expect you to do this, but it will be appreciated, if you feel able to.

## 6. Seek immediate help if you're in crisis

**If you feel like you've reached breaking point and can't cope, it's important to take action immediately.**



If you are actively planning to act on thoughts of suicide, or feel you are not safe or able to prevent yourself from acting, call 999 or visit your local A&E department (open 24 hours).

If you are feeling suicidal, or having thoughts of hurting yourself, call 111 (free to call and available 24 hours).

Other crisis support services include:

Brighton & Hove Mental Health Rapid Response Line:

Telephone: 0300 304 0078, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Sussex Mental Healthline 0800 0309 500 (free phone)
- Shout Sussex text service

By texting the word SUSSEX to 85258, you can access a free, confidential, 24/7 service

If you are not having thoughts of suicide or self-harm, but you do need urgent support, your local GP surgery should be able to offer an appointment quickly, or you can call the Sussex Mental Health Line 24/7. (Details in section 5 of this leaflet).

## Mindfulness, meditation and breathwork

You may have heard of the terms 'mindfulness', 'meditation' and 'breathwork'. These are things that can help us to relax, increase our focus or feel empowered (or all three). Many people think they are difficult to do and can feel quite intimidated by them. However, like anything, the more we do something, the better we become, and the easier it feels.

There is lots of information available about many different methods, some of which are very simple and effective.

According to the website, Mindfulness.org:

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it’s more readily available to us when we practice daily”.

There are various types of meditation, and ‘mindfulness meditation’ is popular because it is simple and good for people with no experience because it can be done alone, without a teacher.

There are also lots of free guided meditations online and on YouTube (in both audio and video format) which can be very helpful.

Mindfulness meditation originates from Buddhist teachings and is the most popular and researched form of meditation in the west. In this type of meditation, you pay attention to your thoughts as they pass through your mind. You don’t judge the thoughts or become involved with them. You simply observe and take note of any patterns.

This practice combines concentration with awareness. You may find it helpful to focus on an object or your breath while you observe any bodily sensations, thoughts, or feelings.

There are various links with information, examples and resources for some of the techniques mentioned here in Section 4 of this booklet.

## The five ways to wellbeing

Evidence and research suggest there are five steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these steps could help you to feel more positive and offer you a sense of purpose in your life. Five Ways to Wellbeing was researched and developed by the New Economics Foundation and enhanced by Mind.

### 1. Connect

Connecting with others, be it someone we already know or someone new, whether in person, by phone, email or text message, can help us to feel a sense of purpose and value. Evidence suggests that letting others know how you are feeling, and listening to others, can significantly increase our feelings of wellbeing. Some people find similar benefits in spending time with pets or animals as a means of connection.



### 2. Learn

The saying ‘every day’s a school day’ and ‘you learn something new every day’ acknowledge the fact that our lives are a continuous learning process. Evidence suggest that learning new things significantly increases our self-esteem and can help to alleviate depression and anxiety.



This could be as simple as trying to find out something new about a friend, the history of your local area or learning a new word. You could read a book or research a topic that’s always interested you but you’ve never fully investigated. There are always lots of free, low-cost and discounted online courses available that you can do at your own pace, in your own time, covering just about any topic you can think about!

### 3. Be Active

Exercise is a really effective way to reduce our levels of anxiety and give our moods a boost. As we exercise, our brain chemistry is changed when endorphins are released, which can calm anxiety and lift our moods. The benefits of exercise are felt during and immediately after exercise, meaning that it can offer quick relief if we are feeling anxious or stressed. Many local leisure centres offer free or low cost gym, swimming and exercise class memberships for limited periods, via a GP referral. You can find out more about this by contacting your local wellbeing hub, who will have information and referral forms.



Being active doesn't have to mean strenuous exercise though and could be as simple as moving around more, doing simple stretch or strength exercises, taking the stairs instead of a lift, a short walk round the local area, observing nature on a regular basis, or perhaps getting off the bus a stop or two earlier than normal and walking the rest of the way to your destination.

### 4. Take Notice

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your well-being, and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities.



Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations. Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you. Here are a few ideas:

- get a plant for your workspace
- have a 'clear the clutter' day
- take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or acting
- take a different route on your journey to or from work
- visit a new place
- simple awareness exercise: take a walk around a local area that you are familiar with, and see how many things you can spot that you have never noticed before.

### 5. Give

Helping and giving to other people is known to increase our feelings of wellbeing, and there are various simple ways that we can do this. For example:

- Donate to a charity, either financially, or by giving unwanted items like clothes to a charity shop, or give food items to a local food bank.
- Do random acts of kindness.
- Say thank you to someone, for something they've done for you.
- Phone a relative or friend who needs support or company.
- Ask a colleague how they are and really listen to the answer.
- Offer to lend a hand if you see a stranger struggling with bags or a pushchair etc.
- Volunteer for a local charity or organisation whose work means something to you or interests you.



# Self Help Resources

We have mentioned lots of resources in this booklet. The links and contact details of them all are listed here.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather, a number of well chosen organisations, groups and websites you may find useful as you manage your mental health.

## Online self-guided CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)

Your GP or local wellbeing hub can give you referral details on self-guided CBT, which can be really helpful while you wait for support from mental health services or other therapies.

## CALM (Campaign against living miserably)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

CALM is a very informative magazine style website with lots of resources, articles and support for mental health. They also have a helpline open every day from 5pm to midnight and a webchat facility, for those who need someone to reach out to.

## Stress Control

[www.stresscontrol.org](http://www.stresscontrol.org).

This website offers a number of free online booklets around managing stress and mental health, as well as a some audio clips on mindfulness, breathing and relaxation which can be very helpful. They can be found in the 'Free Zone' on the site.

## Staying Safe

[www.StayingSafe.net](http://www.StayingSafe.net)

A website to help people to cope with feelings of suicide or self-harm.

## Wellbeing and Coping

[www.WellbeingAndCoping.net](http://www.WellbeingAndCoping.net)

A website co-funded by NHS England to help people feel a bit calmer and find new ways to help them cope.

## Stay Alive App

This is a pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned about someone else who may be. Search for Stay Alive in the App Store, Google Play or from wherever you download your apps.

## Podcasts

There are a number of helpful podcasts and videos available at <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/podcasts>

There are thousands of other mental health podcasts, in fact, too many to list here, available online on a variety of websites and platforms, such as Spotify, ACast, iTunes and so on. A small amount of research will direct you to some that may be a good fit for you, from discussions, advice from experts or people with lived experience, through to those which use, for example, science or comedy or explain topics.

## Contacts in Sussex and beyond

### Sussex Mental Healthline Telephone: 0800 0309 500

24/7 telephone service offering listening support, advice, information, and signposting to anyone experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

The service is available to anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend, including carers and healthcare professionals. You do not need an appointment.

The Sussex Mental Healthline offers support to those who may be in crisis, distressed and in urgent need of help with their mental health.

### Staying Well Service West Sussex

Out-of-hours support in the evenings and weekends for anyone over 18 in West Sussex. If you are finding it hard to cope you can self-refer or ask someone you trust to do it for you.

Staying Well is for people in need of extra support to prevent them going into crisis. Anyone referred to Staying Well will receive a call to discuss what support is needed. Open seven days a week: Monday to Friday, 5pm to 10.30pm and Saturday and Sunday, 12pm to 10.30pm

Offering a safe space in the centre of Worthing where you can receive help and advice from staff along with low key activities to support your well-being. Face-to-face appointments are available every evening between 6pm and 9.30pm and can be made by calling Staying Well on 01903 268107 or by e-mailing: [sww@westsussexmind.org](mailto:sww@westsussexmind.org). If you are unable to come due to travel limitations, some remote support is available via Attend Anywhere (video call) or phone.

The service is not a drop-in and individuals need to phone in advance on each day prior to attending.

[https://westsussexmind.org/help\\_and\\_support/getting-help/our-crisis-prevention-service-staying-well](https://westsussexmind.org/help_and_support/getting-help/our-crisis-prevention-service-staying-well)

### Staying Well Service Brighton & Hove and East Sussex

The Staying Well Space (SWS) is an out-of-hours mental health crisis prevention service, provided at The Wellbeing Hub at Preston Park in Brighton and the Eastbourne and Hastings (St Leonards-On-Sea) Wellbeing Centres. The service is free and available to adults\* with urgent mental health support needs living across East Sussex (\*aged 16 and over) and Brighton and Hove (\*aged 18 and over).

Open 7 days a week, 365 days a year, the Staying Well service provides support and crisis prevention planning. Individuals can also phone the service directly to self-refer for support when they feel they aren't able to cope or feel they are headed towards a crisis point.

If you need urgent mental health support outside of normal working hours, the Staying Well Space is here for you. We primarily offer face-to-face support but if you are unable to physically access the building due to travel limitations, we can provide phone or video call support as an alternative.

Please note, the service is not a drop-in service and requires a referral first so you need to complete a referral form, found via the website link below. Urgent referrals to the service can be made by calling 0800 0236475 during the opening times listed below, by location.

Individuals can contact the service directly to self-refer for support when they feel they aren't able to cope or feel they are headed towards a crisis point.

Support is provided from three locations:

## Brighton

Weekdays – 5.30pm to 10.30pm

Weekends – 3.30pm to 10.30pm

Telephone (Freephone): 0800 023 6475, choose option #3

Email: [stayingwell.brighton@southdown.org](mailto:stayingwell.brighton@southdown.org)

## Eastbourne

Weekdays – 4pm to 10.30pm

Weekends – 3pm to 10.30pm

Telephone (Freephone): 0800 023 6475, choose option #1

Email: [stayingwell.eastbourne@southdown.org](mailto:stayingwell.eastbourne@southdown.org)

## Hastings (St Leonards-On-Sea)

Weekdays – 4pm to 10.30pm

Weekends – 3pm to 10.30pm

Telephone (Freephone): 0800 023 6475, choose option #2

Email: [stayingwell.hastings@southdown.org](mailto:stayingwell.hastings@southdown.org)

Urgent referrals to the service can be made by calling 0800 0236475 during the opening times listed above, by location.

<https://www.southdown.org/services/staying-well-space/>

## Samaritans

Telephone: 116123 – free and available 24 hours a day. [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## CALM Helpline

Telephone: 0800 58 58 58, 5pm to midnight every day or online via [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

Telephone: 01273 666950, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri or Email: [info@mindcharity.co.uk](mailto:info@mindcharity.co.uk)

## Credit

This booklet has been co-produced and edited in collaboration with Possability People's Mental Health Lived Experience Advisory Group. This is a forum for people who have a wide range of experience using mental health services. The group feeds back to the NHS to improve and assist future service delivery.

Produced by Possability People in October 2022

Telephone: 01273 894040 or email: [hello@possabilitypeople.org.uk](mailto:hello@possabilitypeople.org.uk).

[www.possabilitypeople.org.uk](http://www.possabilitypeople.org.uk). Possability People is a Registered Charity No. 1114435 Co No. 05706441