

Looking out for those around you

Good Thinking's quick guide to supporting friends, family and others in your local community who may be struggling with their mental health.



In these challenging times, it's important to be kind and look out for those around you. Here at [Good Thinking](https://www.good-thinking.uk), London's digital mental wellbeing service, we have created this practical guide with three simple steps to help you check in with people on a regular basis and see how they are – the more open everyone can be about their feelings, the better.

STEP 1

Spot the signs



It can be difficult to know if a relative, friend or someone else in your community is struggling with their mental health but there are a few things you can look out for.

- Do they seem particularly sad, worried or overwhelmed or have they talked about feeling unhappy, hopeless or trapped?
- Are they often tired or lacking energy?
- Do they find it hard to control their emotions (e.g. are they often irritable, restless, tearful or extremely happy or excited)?
- Are they experiencing physical symptoms regularly (e.g. headaches and tummy aches)?
- Are they more distant than usual (e.g. are they not replying to messages or not wanting to talk to, or be around, people)?
- Have their behaviour or habits changed (e.g. are they eating or sleeping more or less or are they turning to coping mechanisms like alcohol or drugs)?

Use Good Thinking to learn more about the symptoms of stress, anxiety, mood disorders and sleep disorders.

STEP 2

Check in and let them know you care



It may not always be possible to spot the signs so it's really important to check how people are feeling and to create a safe and supportive space for them to open up. If someone tells you they are struggling with their mental health, your acceptance and compassion can make a big difference.

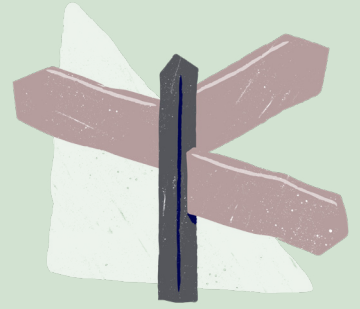
You might want to do the following:

- Use [Thrive LDN's guide to talking about mental health](#) to help you start a conversation. Many people find it difficult to talk about their feelings so this guide provides tips, prompts and example questions if you aren't sure where to start.
- Be patient, listen and give them space to respond – don't feel you have to fill any silences or offer solutions immediately.
- If someone is reluctant to talk, reassure them that you are there for them if they ever want a chat.
- Behave the way you always have – call, text, visit and do rewarding activities together.

Remember that it's important to look after yourself too. If supporting someone who is struggling is affecting your own wellbeing, it's ok to take a step back.

STEP 3

Help them get the support they need



If they choose to confide in you, the most important thing you can do is show them that you care for them and want to help.

Good Thinking has a great range of advice, tools and support which are free and available 24/7 – for example, you could:

- Encourage them to try one of Good Thinking's free NHS-approved apps to help with lowering stress and anxiety, improving sleep and boosting mood:
 - Personalised learning modules which teach you coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety
 - A mindfulness course which helps with management of stress, anxiety and depression
- Suggest that they incorporate something from the Five ways to good mental wellbeing in their daily life.
- Search Good Thinking's library of expert advice articles where you'll find short guides with tips and resource recommendations to help you with a range of concerns, including dealing with uncertainty, money worries and getting enough sleep.
- If they have lost a loved one, share Good Thinking's bereavement advice with them.

Urgent support and professional help

If your support doesn't seem to be having much impact and changes in your loved one's emotions and behaviour start to affect how they live, don't worry – it's not your fault.

Sometimes people need professional support so perhaps you could help them to:

- Make an appointment with their GP.
- Make a self-referral to an [NHS Talking Therapies](#) service.
- Contact a mental health charity via a phone helpline or online forum (e.g. [Mind](#) or [Samaritans](#)).
- If your relative or friend is very distressed, call their [local 24/7 NHS mental health helpline](#), NHS 111 or 999.
- Use [Good Thinking's self-assessment tool](#) (you can complete it for someone else) for a guiding diagnosis and if necessary, relevant treatment advice.

Visit www.good-thinking.uk/urgent-support for a range of urgent support services and helplines available 24/7.

This guide has been developed by Good Thinking in partnership with: