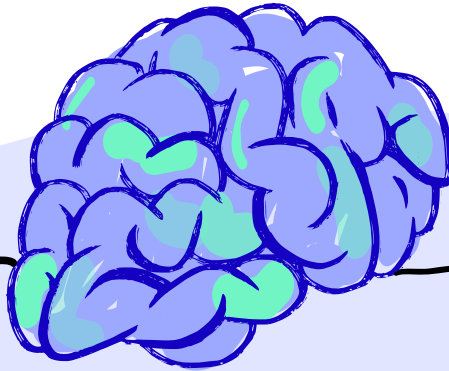


Finding the Words:

Talking to the Doctor about your Mental Health



This belongs to:

If this booklet does not belong to you, we kindly ask that you respect their privacy.

We know that caring about someone who is struggling with their mental health can be difficult. For more information and support go to:

Mind.org.uk → [Helping someone else seek help](#)

or

Mentalhealth.org.uk → [Support someone with their mental health](#)

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Important Reminder

You are not alone.

Accept

Decline



Hello!

We're glad you're here. Opening this booklet is an important first step. We know that asking for help with your mental health can feel difficult, especially when you don't know what to say or expect.

This resource has been created with medical students from Cardiff University Medical School and young people with lived experience at Mind in Gwent, to help you understand your feelings and prepare for seeking support from your doctor.

Use it in whatever way feels helpful, from start to finish or by choosing certain sections. There is a mix of activities, information, other resources and a few top tips 

Help is available, and we're here to support you.

We hope you find it useful.

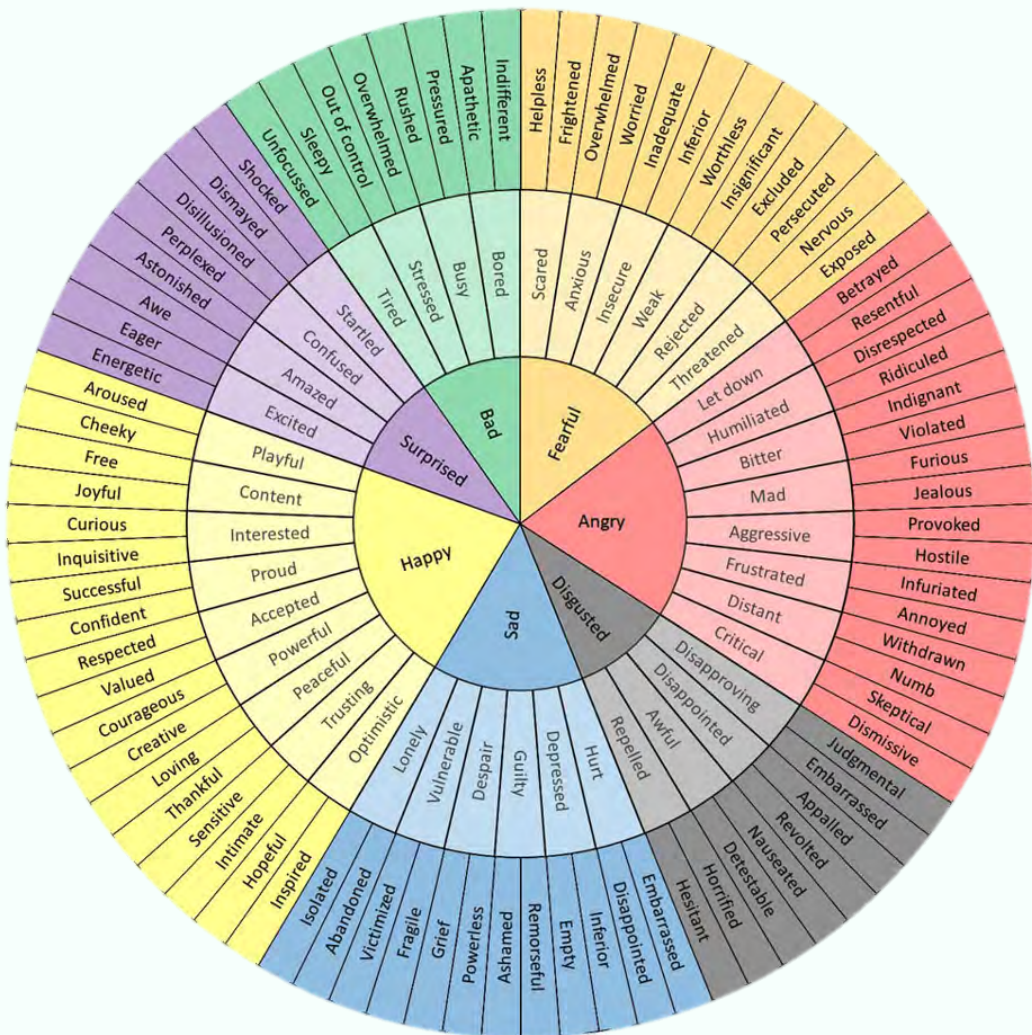
Mood Tracker

Tracking how you feel can help you understand, and identify patterns and triggers. In the “notes” section, record things that may affect your mood such as sleep, diet, alcohol / drugs, exercise, stressful events or periods.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Notes
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Finding the Words

Feelings can be complicated and hard to explain. If you're struggling to find the right words, use the wheel below to help. Remember, there are no "bad" emotions, all feelings are valid and important to acknowledge.



How I Feel Checklist

Mood

- ☐ I feel low, empty or hopeless ☾
- ☐ I feel like everything is pointless ☾
- ☐ I cry and get upset easily and don't know why ☾ ☆
- ☐ I get angry and can't calm down 🪐
- ☐ Sometimes the world around me doesn't feel real ☾ ☆
- ☐ I can't stop worrying ☆
- ☐ I feel out of control or panicked ☆
- ☐ I get so worried / nervous, it stops me doing normal things ☆
- ☐ I don't enjoy things I used to like ☾

Thoughts

- ☐ My thoughts feel overwhelming or scary ☾ ☆ 🪐
- ☐ If I don't do things a certain way, I worry something bad will happen ☆
- ☐ I have repeated and disturbing thoughts / memories / flashbacks ☆
- ☐ Thoughts of hurting myself 🪐
- ☐ Thoughts of harming other people 🪐
- ☐ Thoughts of ending my own life 🪐

Sleep and Energy

- ☐ I find it hard to fall / stay asleep ☆ ☾
- ☐ I'm always tired, even when I rest ☾
- ☐ I am sleeping too much ☾
- ☐ I have nightmares ☆ ☾

Relationships

- ☐ I feel alone ☾
- ☐ I can't face seeing people ☆ ☾
- ☐ I argue with people a lot

Behaviours

- ☐ I do things that put me at risk, in danger, or get me into trouble 🪐
- ☐ Need to check, clean or count to feel safe ☆
- ☐ Finding it hard to care for myself (like showering, brushing teeth, getting dressed) ☾

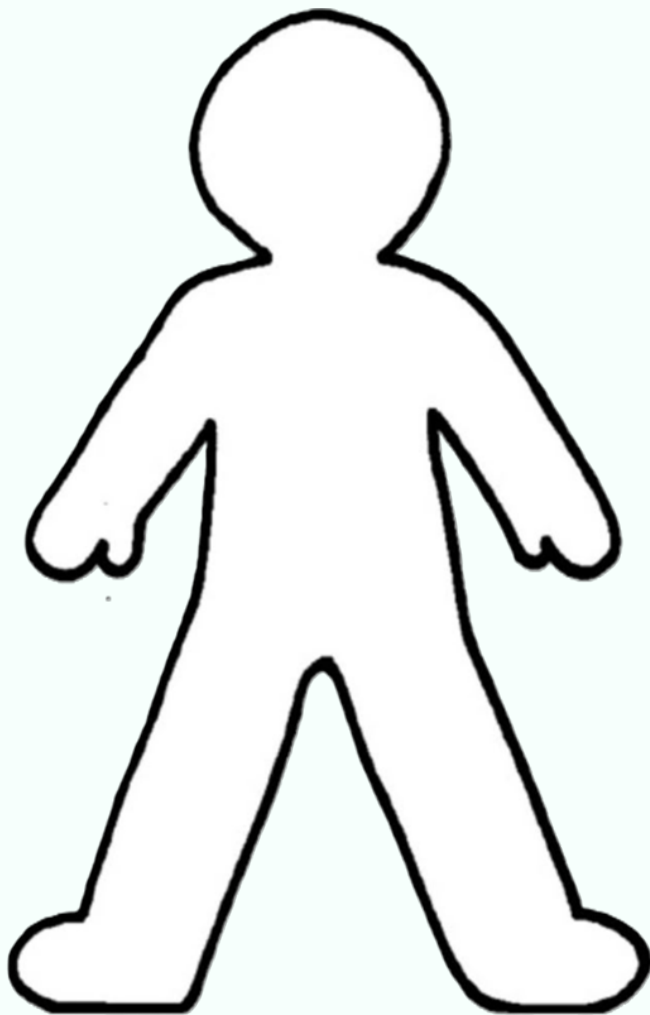
Other

- ☐ Loss of appetite or overeating
- ☐ I keep taking drugs / drinking too much
- ☐ I hate my body ☆
- ☐ I can see or hear things that other people can't 🪐



Where I Feel It Body Map

Mental health can affect your body too. Some people notice physical symptoms like headaches, tiredness, stomach aches or a racing heart. Use the body outline to mark any symptoms you experience.



Note down how often each one happens and how long it lasts

Explaining how you feel

How have I been feeling lately?

Sad, anxious, numb, overwhelmed? Have my feelings been changing quickly or lasting a long time? Is this how I usually feel, or does something feel different?

When did this start?

Can I remember what was going on in my life when it started? Has anything triggered it or made it worse?

How is this affecting my day-to-day life?

Is it hard to sleep, eat, go to school, or see friends? Am I struggling with focus, motivation, or energy? Has anything changed in my relationships?

Have I talked to anyone else about this?

Who have I told (if anyone)? What was their reaction? Do I feel supported?

What do I want help with?

Do I want to feel better? Do I want someone to listen? Am I hoping for a diagnosis, support, or just to be taken seriously?

What have I already tried?

Previous therapies, medication or coping strategies? Did anything help or not help?

Other Notes:

Identifying Difficulties

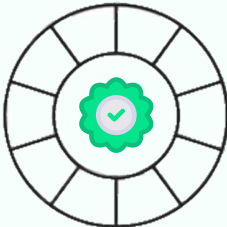
Sometimes when you're feeling not quite yourself, it can be hard to know why. Different areas of life can affect how you feel, even if it isn't one clear reason.

Colour in each circle to show how satisfied you feel with each area of your life right now. A full circle means things are going well, empty means it's difficult. This may help you notice areas that might be affecting your mental health.

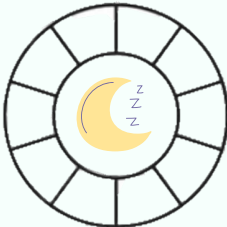
Home



Feeling Safe



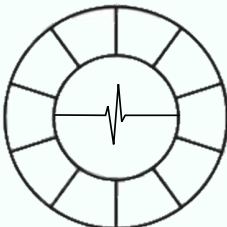
Sleep



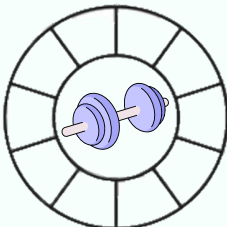
Finances



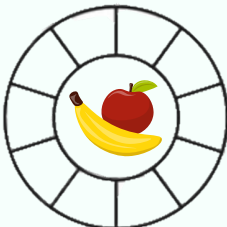
Physical Health



Exercise



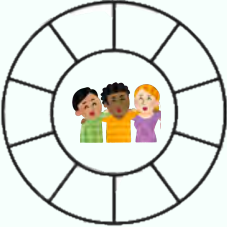
Healthy Diet



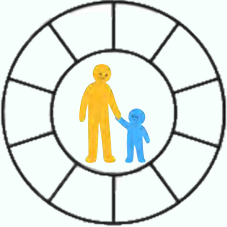
Hobbies



Friends



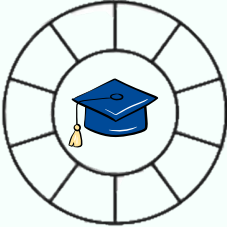
Family



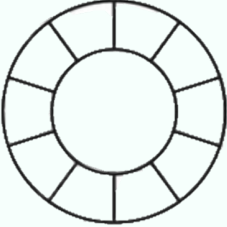
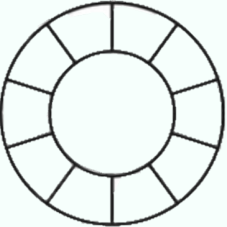
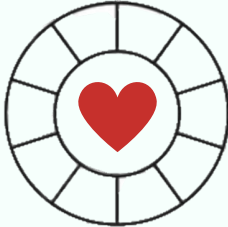
Work



Education



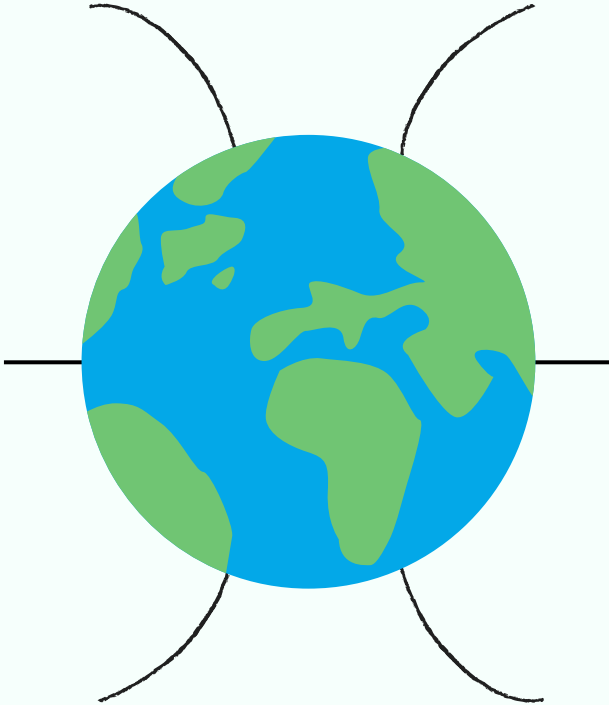
Relationships



←
Add your own!

My World

When things feel tough, it is easy to feel alone. It can be helpful to remind yourself who is around you in your world. They don't all have to be people you are comfortable talking to about your mental health - the people who distract us, make us laugh or are just there, are just as important.



Who can help?



The right support looks different for everyone. You might be supported by one person or several. Your GP can help you access many of the professionals shown here if needed.

How can the doctor help?



Talk to you, listen, and be there when things are tough



Help you and, if you want to, your loved ones understand what you're going through



Refer to specialist mental health services (including CAMHS) and counselling



Make a plan with you to help keep you safe if you are at risk of hurting yourself



Assess, treat and give advice on physical health concerns e.g. self harm wounds



Give you contact details for crisis team / helplines



Write a 'fit note' (previously known as a sick note) to give to your employer if you need more than 7 days off work



Discuss medication (although many will not prescribe mental health meds to under 18s as it can increase suicidal thoughts)



Direct you to self help resources



Book a follow up appointment to see you again in a couple of weeks to check how you're doing

Organising the Appointment

I need support



Is it an emergency?

It is an emergency if you have seriously harmed yourself, or are in immediate danger and feel unable to keep yourself safe.

Yes

Go to A&E or call 999

No

See your GP

Not sure

Call NHS 111 (Option 2)



Who would you like to see?

Next available GP

Usually the quickest option

A specific GP

You can ask for a doctor you've seen before. You may have to wait longer



If you need a same-day appointment, you might not be able to choose who you see



What type of appointment would you prefer?

In person

Think about transport and getting to the GP surgery

On the phone

Ensure you have somewhere private where you can talk openly



Your practice might automatically offer one, you can ask to change it if you'd prefer



Ready to book



Note down your availability and when would work best for you

Bringing someone?

If it helps you feel more supported, you are welcome to bring someone you trust with you to your appointment, like a friend, parent, or carer. They can stay with you throughout the appointment, wait outside, or you can see the doctor on your own (regardless how old you are). It is completely your choice and the GP will respect it.

Booking the Appointment

Every GP surgery has different ways to book an appointment. It might be:



Online



Phone



In Person

If you're not sure how to book, go to the practice website, or ask at reception.

If you are booking over the phone, or face to face, the conversation might sound something like this:



"Hello, [practice name]. How can I help?"

"Hello, can I book a GP appointment please?"



"Ok. What is your full name and date of birth?"

"[Your name and date of birth]"



"What is it about? Is it urgent?"

"It's about my mental health. Yes, I'm really struggling and need to speak to someone today please / No, it's not urgent but I would appreciate if I could see someone soon if possible please."



"The next available appointment is..."

"Yes, that works for me. Thank you."



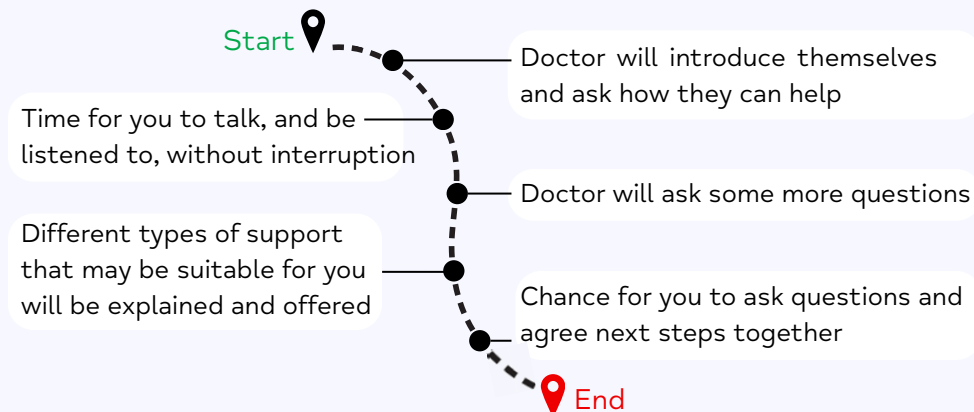
If you have a specific request:

- Certain doctor → "Are there any appointments with Dr ____?"
- Appointment type → "Could I have the appointment face to face / on the phone instead?"

What to Expect

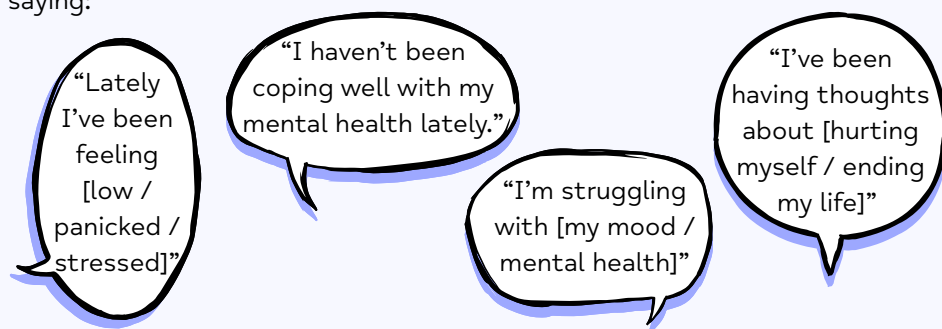
What happens in the appointment?

Appointments are approximately 10 minutes long. Every doctor structures appointments slightly differently, but this is a general idea:



Starting the conversation:

Your doctor will usually begin with a question like: “How can I help?”, “What can I do for you today?” or “What brings you in today?”. This is your chance to explain things in your own words. If that feels difficult, you could try saying:



You could use these examples, or refer back to the ‘How I feel checklist’.

If you can, give some more detail here about how you’ve been feeling (like in the ‘Explaining how you feel’ section). But don’t worry if you can’t, the sentences above are enough, and the doctor can guide you from there.

Questions the doctor might ask:

Most of the questions the doctor will ask are covered in the “Explaining how you feel” section, which helps you describe your thoughts, feelings and experiences. Other things they might also ask about include:

 Health	 Home	 Life	 Safety
• Mood • Sleep • Appetite • Energy • Any medical conditions • Current medications	• Home life • Who you live with • Family’s health conditions	• School / work • Friends • Hobbies • Recent events, changes or stresses	• Alcohol intake • Drug use • Self harm • Suicide

They’re not judging you, they’re asking to understand how they can best support you. Answer at your own pace, it’s also okay if you’re not sure.



If you’re worried, write down how you would answer each question

Explaining what you need:

To understand what you’re hoping for and the kind of support you’re open to trying, you might be asked “What were you hoping I could do for you today?”.

There are a few different ways a GP can help (a few below, more on page 15) , they won’t always know which feels right for you unless you tell them.

- ☐ Someone to listen & reassurance
- ☐ Talking therapy
- ☐ Practical help e.g. coping strategies
- ☐ Safety plan & crisis support
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Self help resources
- ☐ Advice & guidance
- ☐ Medication
- ☐ Diagnosis

If you are not sure what you need, that is okay too. You can say that, and the GP can help you work out the next steps together.

Common Worries

Confidentiality

Will they tell anyone what I say?

You are entitled to a confidential appointment with your doctor at any age. This means most of what you say stays private. They won't share it without your permission unless they are worried about your safety or someone else's. If they do need to share something, they should explain this to you and only share what is necessary, with the right people.

Talking about self harm and suicide

Will I have to talk about self harm and suicide?

Your doctor will likely ask about self harm and suicide. They ask because they care about your safety and want to make sure you get the right support. If this is you have experienced, it can really help to be honest. These thoughts are more common than people think, and doctors are used to talking about it. But if you're not ready to talk about it, that's okay too, you can just say "I'd rather not talk about that right now".

Is it serious enough?

I'm worried my problems are not serious enough and I'm wasting their time.

You are not wasting their time, promise! There's no such thing as "not serious enough" when it comes to mental health. GPs are there for early support, not just in a crisis and actually, getting support early is a really good idea.

Crying

What if I cry?

That's okay! It's really common and completely normal, especially when talking about mental health. Take a second to take a few deep breaths. Your doctor will give you the space and time you need.

Being judged

Will they judge me?

GPs are trained to listen without judging. They have heard all kinds of things before, and whatever you say is unlikely to shock them. Their job is to support you, not to judge.

If the Appointment Doesn't go well...

Sometimes appointments don't go as well as we'd like. This can happen for lots of different reasons. Here are some things you could try:

1

Speak Up

Tell your doctor if something doesn't feel helpful. Simply saying "I understand what you're saying but that doesn't feel helpful for me" can open up a better conversation.

2

Try Again

Appointments can be short and you might not find a solution in one visit. It's okay to book another appointment. If you got on with the doctor it may be helpful to see the same one again.

3

Ask for Someone Different

If you don't feel comfortable with one doctor, you can ask to see a different one. It is important you feel listened to and understood.

4

Bring Support

Taking someone you trust with you can help you feel more confident and supported.

5

Explore Other Options

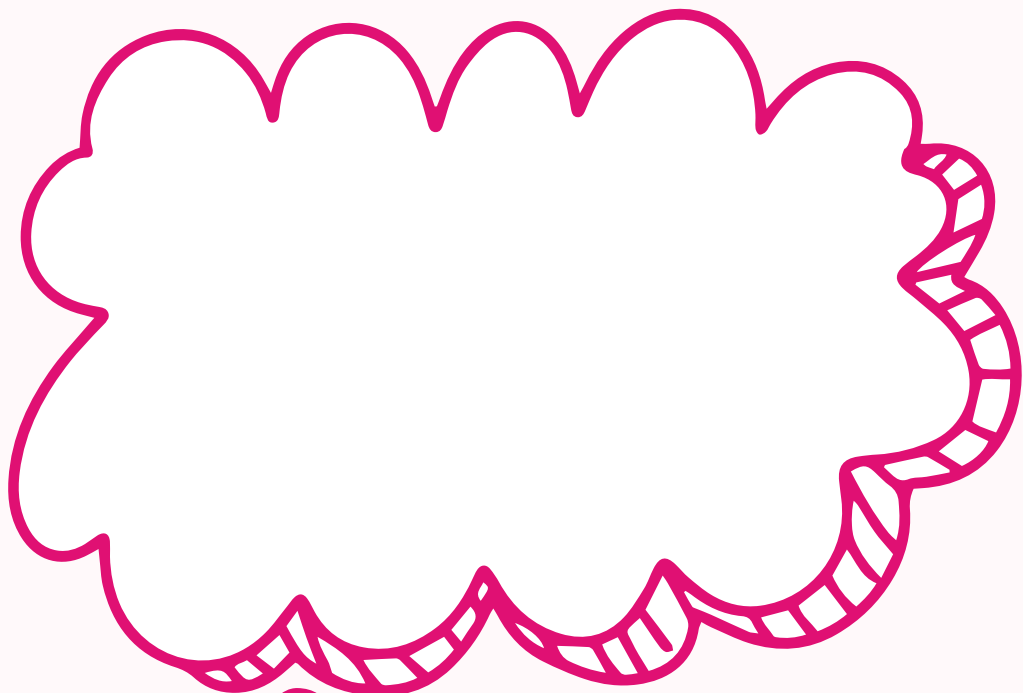
If you don't feel ready to go back to the doctor just yet, have a look at the "Finding Support" section for other options. If you feel something went seriously wrong, you have the right to make a complaint. You can ask at reception about how to do this.

If the first step doesn't work out, there are other ways forward. Try not to let it put you off reaching out again. You deserve the right support.

Reflection



Regardless how it went, be gentle with yourself for the rest of the day



How did my appointment go?

Did you feel listened to and understood? Did anything feel hard? What was helpful?

What did the doctor say or suggest?

Any follow up support or referrals? Do I need to remember anything e.g. appointments, advice?

What do I want to do next?

Am I open to trying what was suggested? Do I want to go back and ask more questions? Is there someone I can speak to about my appointment?



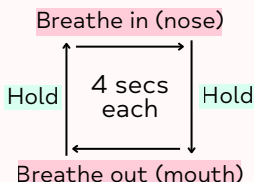
Quick Coping Strategies

Grounding

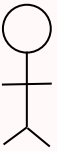
5-4-3-2-1 Senses

- 5 things you **SEE** 
- 4 things you **FEEL** 
- 3 things you **HEAR** 
- 2 things you **SMELL** 
- 1 thing you **TASTE** 

Box Breathing



Muscle Relaxation

- 
- Start at your head, down to your toes.
 - Squeeze each muscle in turn for 5 seconds & relax.

Distraction

Alphabet Word Game

Choose a category and name something within it for every letter of the alphabet.



Remember the Room

Look around and try to remember everything you can see, close your eyes and list them. How many can you get?



Get Creative

Draw, colour, paint, reorganise your room, bake, make a mood board



Physical Release

Exercise

Walk, run, star jumps, stretch, weight lifting, any form of exercise you enjoy to burn energy and release endorphins.



Explosive Energy

Scream into / punch a pillow, throw a ball against the wall, dance and sing to loud music.



HALT !

Before you carry on, HALT, are you...
Hungry? Angry?
Lonely? Tired?
Our bodies need the basics first.

Comfort

Good Memories

Look through photos that make you smile. Talk about your favourite memories with people you love.



Get Cozy

Make yourself comfortable - a bath / shower, comfy clothes, warm drink & a good movie.



Write It Down

Putting how you feel into words can help you process it & feel a little lighter.



Safety Plan

Triggers:	Early warning signs:	My Coping Skills:
If someone I loved was feeling this way, I would say:	One thing worth living for:	
People I can speak to:		
		
		
		
Safe places:	To keep myself safe I will...	
		
		
		

Finding Support

The next pages list lots of resources that might help you. There are lots of options because what works for one person may not work for another.

In an Emergency

Go to A&E or call 999 now if:

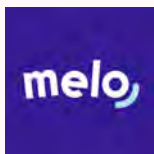
- You have seriously harmed yourself
- You are in immediate danger
- You don't feel able to keep yourself safe



A&E is there for mental health emergencies just as much as physical ones. You are not wasting anyone's time. It is important are safe and get support.

Local Support

Gwent



Melo - melo.cymru

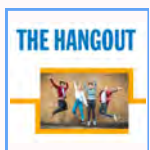
Website created by Aneurin Bevan healthboard as a central mental health hub to with information on local services, helplines, courses and self help.

Cardiff



Stepiau - stepiau.org

Cardiff and Vale equivalent of Melo, the online mental health hub.

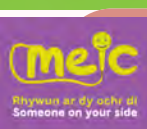


The Hangout - 26-28 Churchhill Way, Cardiff CF10 2DY

A safe space for young people (aged 11-18) needing support. You can just turn up (the address is above). It is open 3pm-9pm on weekdays and 12pm-6pm on weekends.

Helplines

To talk things through and confidentially share what's on your mind.

Crisis		NHS 111 : 24/7, for anyone in mental health crisis Call: 111 + option 2
		Shout : 24/7 text support, for anyone in crisis Text 'SHOUT' to: 85258
		Papyrus : 24/7, for under 35s thinking of suicide Call: 0800 068 4141 or Text 'HOPE' to 88247
General		Samaritans : 24/7, for anyone who needs support Call: 116 123
		Meic : 8am - midnight, for under 25s in Wales Call or WhatsApp message: 080880 23456
		C.A.L.L. : 24/7, for anyone in Wales struggling Call: 0800 132 737



In busy times there may be a wait. Please try another number, ring someone you know, or go to the 'In an Emergency' advice (page 26).

What can I talk about?

As indicated above, different helplines offer different types of support.

- **Crisis:** To support people feeling overwhelmed, unsafe or thinking about suicide - but not in immediate danger.
- **General:** To talk about anything that is affecting you (e.g stress, low mood, loneliness, relationships, work). You don't need to be in crisis to reach out.

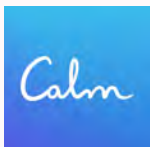
Apps

Quick, everyday support. The features of each app are colour coded below.

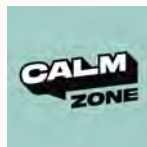
- Mood tracker
- Coping strategies
- Guided meditation
- Journal
- Games
- Breathing exercises



Calm harm



Calm



CALMzone



Headspace



Tappy



What's Up?



Daylio



Rootd



Self help courses

A structured, step-by-step way to work through something at your own pace, helping you build skills and understand your feelings better over time.



Living Life to the Full - llttf.com/courses

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) based course with 8 free modules and activity sheets. Covering themes of low mood, anger, confidence and negative thinking.



SilverCloud - nhs.wales.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/

Variety of free CBT courses for different struggles and ages.



ACTivate your life -

phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/activate-your-life/

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) based course. 4 x 40 minute videos with written summaries and activity guides to improve general wellbeing.

Websites

To learn more about how you're feeling, understand something better, find tips and advice.

Mind : Mental health information and support

Go to: mind.org.uk



YoungMinds: Information aimed at young people

Go to: youngminds.org.uk



Childline : Information, distraction activities and 24/7 helpline via phone or online chat. Aimed at under 19s.

Go to: childline.org.uk

childline

What topics should I look at?

The resources we've shared have a lot of information, which can feel overwhelming and hard to navigate. To make things easier, we've suggested some search terms that might match how you're feeling, based on the symbols on the "How I feel" checklist on page 8.



Low mood, depression, motivation, loneliness



Anxiety, stress, panic, worry, confidence, self esteem, trauma, sleep, insomnia



Distress, crisis, self harm, suicidal thoughts, psychosis

This isn't about giving you a diagnosis. It's simply a way to help you find information and support that might be useful for you.

Not sure what all the words mean?

You might come across words you've never heard before. That's completely normal. If you're unsure what something means, look here:

- [Mind - Treatment and Support Glossary](#)
- [Bupa - Mental Health Terms](#)

Notes

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

