Promoting positive mental health during COVID-19

THRIVE BRISTOL

Improving mental health for all

Mental health

- We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health

- Mental health relates to how we think, feel and react to things

- The 'Five ways to wellbeing' are steps that evidence suggests can improve wellbeing. Read about them here

Exercise 1

Come up with ideas for the 'Five ways to wellbeing' with social distancing or isolation

- Give
- Keep learning
- Be active
- Take notice
- Connect

Mental health problems

- Mental health problems affect thoughts, feelings or reactions to things; these become frequently difficult to cope with
- They affect 1 in 4 people in any given year
- Common problems include depression and anxiety; rarer problems include schizophrenia and bipolar disorder
- Stigma around mental health problems can make it hard for people to access help

What affects our mental health (1)

- There are a range of factors that increase the risk of someone experiencing poor mental health, including:

What happens to us	• e.g. Job loss • Bereavement
What we grow up with	• e.g. Adverse Childhood Experiences • School life
What we're born with	• e.g. Genetics • Physical health condition
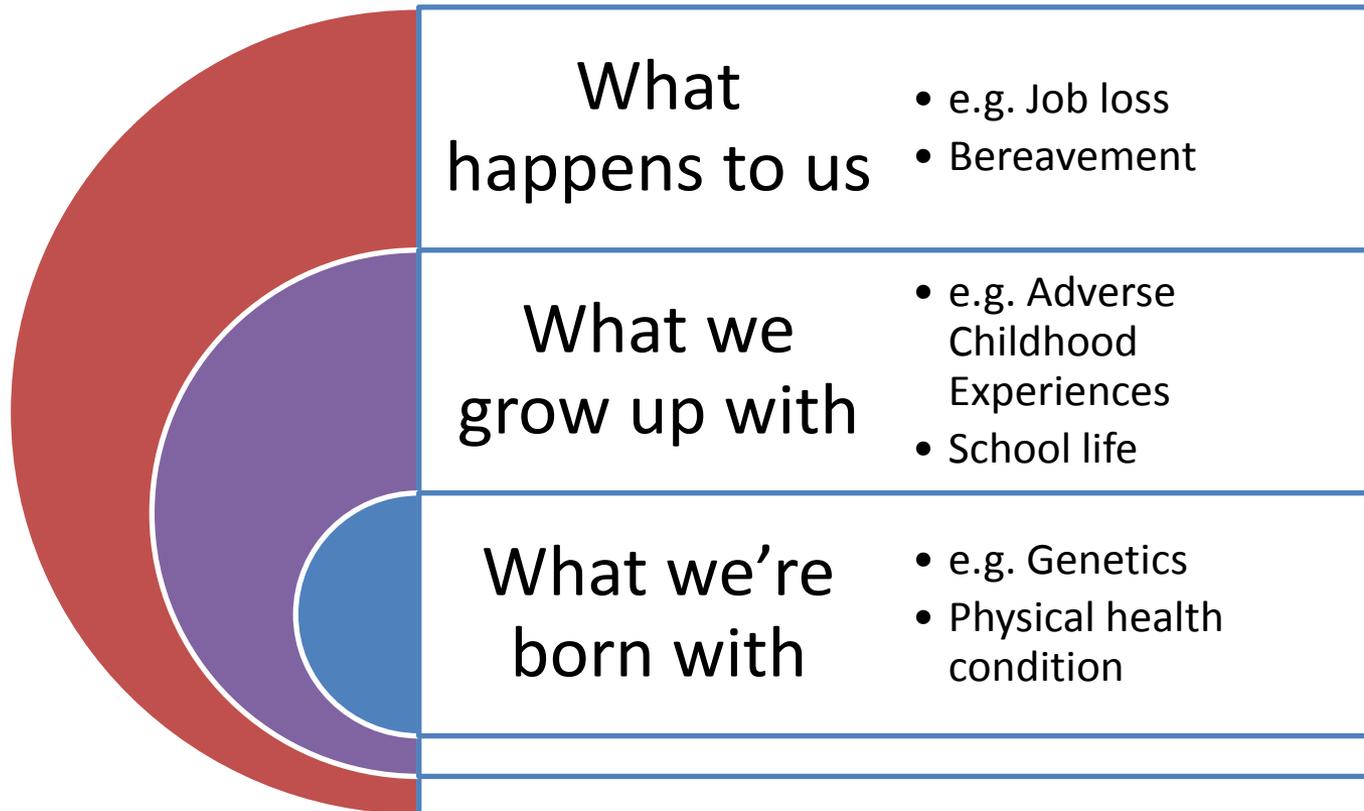
What affects our mental health (2)

Other things that can affect our mental health include:

- Caring responsibilities
- Loneliness
- Money worries
- Work issues
- Housing issues
- Pregnancy and bringing up children
- Traumatic events
- Physical health issues
- Smoking, drinking, gambling, drug misuse

Stress and anxiety

- Everyone experiences stress and anxiety – a natural reaction to some situations
- The fight / flight response
- Low-level stress can even be helpful

- But sometimes these feelings can become constant or overwhelming
- Recognising the signs can be helpful

Exercise 2

Think of examples for signs of stress and anxiety in three categories:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Behaviours

Signs of stress and anxiety

- Thoughts e.g. 'Something bad will happen'; 'I can't cope'; 'I'm not good enough'

- Feelings e.g. tense, sweaty, heart racing, fast breathing, stomach ache

- Behaviours e.g. avoiding or escaping from things that trigger anxiety; using alcohol or drugs

A negative cycle

- Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours continually affect each other
- A negative cycle can develop
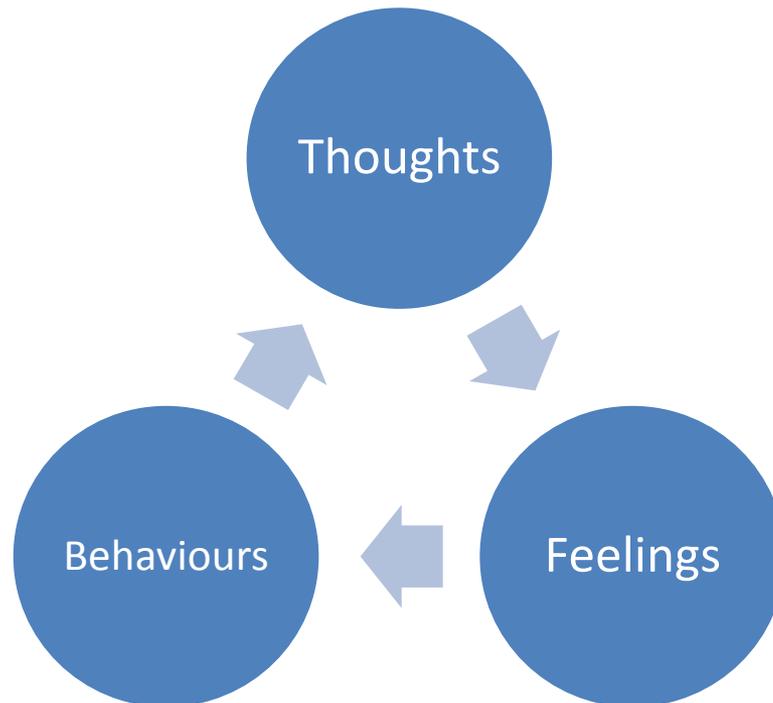
Breaking the cycle - coping techniques for stress and anxiety

- Relaxation - slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness. Audio files of relaxation techniques are available [here](#)

- Reframe unhelpful thoughts – recognise, challenge and replace them. Find out more in this [short video](#)

- Set a specific 'worry time' each day to help focus on other things the rest of the time

- Face things you want to avoid; slowly build up time in situations that cause you worry

Exercise 3

Try a relaxation exercise

- audio files here

Low mood and depression

- Everyone feels low from time to time, especially after distressing events or major life changes

- Someone might be experiencing depression if these feelings last for more than a couple of weeks and they no longer get pleasure from things for most of each day

- Recognising the signs can be helpful

A negative cycle – low mood

Thoughts

Everything is hopeless

I'm worthless

It's my fault

Feelings

Tired

Disinterested

Trouble sleeping

Change to appetite

Behaviours

Withdrawing

Stay in bed

Stop doing things

Alcohol/drugs

Coping techniques for low mood

- Increase helpful activity – things you enjoy, physical activity, talking to friends and family

- Reframe unhelpful thoughts

- Get better sleep – find out how in this short video

- Healthy living – being active, cutting back on alcohol, having a healthy balanced diet. For more information see the NHS One You website

Exercise 4

Practice reframing unhelpful thoughts:

- Recognise e.g. 'Everything is hopeless'

- Challenge - what is the evidence for the thought? Are there other explanations? What would you say to a friend having the same thought?

- Replace the thought with a more positive one

Mental health during COVID-19

- Data from the Office for National Statistics show that levels of anxiety and low happiness have risen sharply

- Possible worries and issues:
    - worries about the outbreak
    - social distancing and isolation
    - job loss, financial insecurity
    - bereavement
    - pressures at home
    - domestic abuse
    - trauma experienced by health and care workers

STAY HOME
PROTECT THE NHS
SAVE LIVES

Top tips for mental health during COVID-19

See Top tips in more detail here

- Stay connected with people
- Talk about your worries
- Stick to the facts – GOV.UK and NHS websites
- Support and help others
- Look after your body
- Stay on top of difficult feelings
- Do things you enjoy
- Look after your sleep
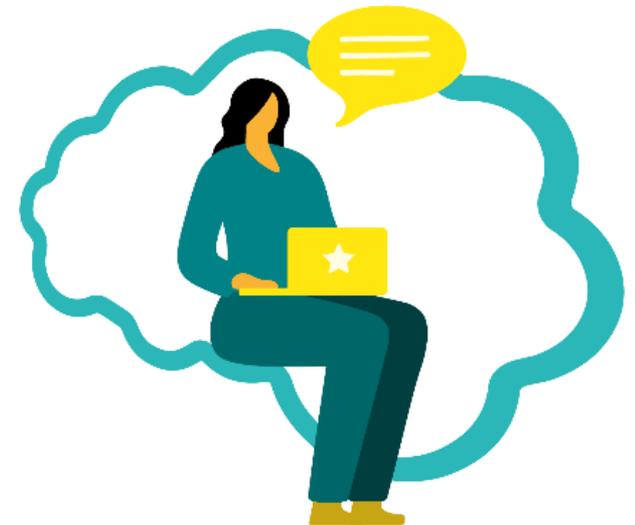
Responding to wellbeing concerns

We will be covering the following actions:

- Listen, reflect, acknowledge
- Ask about suicide if appropriate
- Discuss coping techniques
- Discuss further support
- Record data

Listening skills

- Just listening to someone helps them to feel understood and valued

- Reflect back things they have said and acknowledge things they are finding hard

- Try to resist the urge to 'fix' things

'That sounds really difficult'

'You said you've felt lonely over the last few weeks'

'You've spoken to some friends and that helped'

Exercise 5

Skills practice – listen, reflect, acknowledge

- Have a wellbeing conversation – one person is the 'client', the other is the 'worker'

- Discuss a mild issue – nothing distressing or complicated

Urgent support (1)

- If someone describes little interest or pleasure in doing things and feeling down, depressed or hopeless in the last two weeks, ask:

  – *Have you had thoughts about ending your life?*

- It is important that this is asked, clearly and directly; it does not put the idea in a person's mind

- If their answer is yes:

  – *Is this something you have a plan for? Ask how/when*

Urgent support (2)

- If their answer is yes and there is immediate risk to life call 999

- If their answer is yes but there is no immediate risk to life, discuss a plan for staying safe:

  - Contact [Bristol Mental Health](#) crisis help 24/7, call 0300 555 0334

  - See 'Further support' slide and coping techniques

- Online suicide prevention training: https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training/

Coping techniques

- See previous slides on the Five ways to wellbeing, coping techniques for anxiety and low mood and the Top tips for mental health during COVID-19

- Where possible, try to empower the person to find their own solutions:

  – *What are your best hopes for this situation?*

  – *What would things look like if your hopes were realised?*

 – *What are you doing already that might help?*

Further support

- General Practitioner (GP)
- VitaMinds – NHS psychological therapies (self-referral)
- Bristol Mind - Bristol MindLine is a confidential free-phone helpline, call 0808 808 0330
- The Samaritans has a 24 hour telephone and email support, call 116 123
- Talk Club is a talking and listening support network for men
- Elefriends is a supportive online community run by Mind
- AWP (Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust) has set up a 24/7 phone support line for service users requiring support or advice during this time, 0300 303 1320
- Directories of Bristol services - Independent Mental Health Network and CASS and Well Aware
- Non-mental health signposting in handout accompanying this training

Children and young people:

- [OTR Bristol](): mental health support for people aged 11-25

- [Kooth](): free online counselling and support for 11-18 year olds

- [Childline](): support for any worries online, on the phone, anytime

Record data

- These are suggestions; your organisation may already have processes in place

- 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday, on a scale from 0 – 10?' (0-4 = low happiness)

- Client's main concerns

- Equalities data
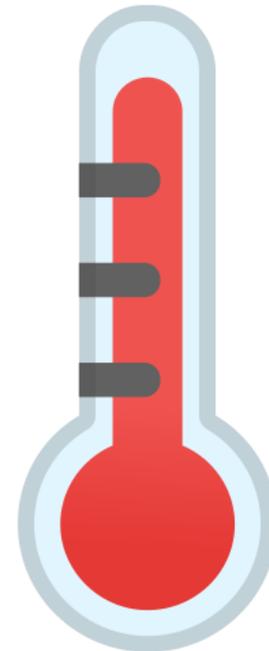
Diversity and equalities

- Consider each individual's experience based on factors such as their age, gender, culture and sexuality

- There are higher levels of mental health problems among those living in financial hardship, some minority ethnic groups, people in LGBT+ communities and those over the age of 65

- CASS Bristol's healthy living directory includes information on services with an equalities focus and resources in many different languages

Exercise 6

Skills practice – responding to wellbeing concerns

- Listen, reflect, acknowledge
- Ask about suicide if appropriate
- Discuss coping techniques
- Discuss further support
- Record data

Support for key and essential workers

It might feel tricky for frontline workers to take care of their own wellbeing at the moment, but support is available:

- Call 116 123
- Text KEYWORKER to 85258
- Visit the Our Frontline website

Silver linings (1)

- It is important to acknowledge that there are some positive things happening during this time:
  - The vast majority of people are helping by complying with social distancing measures
  - Key workers are getting the appreciation that they deserve
  - There has been a huge community response
  - Our impact on the environment has been reduced

- We should aim to sustain positive actions beyond COVID-19

Silver linings (2)

- For some, this time has created space to think about what really matters in life – health and wellbeing, connection, kindness and community

- Positive Psychology teaches us to look for the good things in life, and to discover and play to our strengths

  – Find out more about your top character strengths

  – Keeping a gratitude journal can help to notice good things more often

Feedback

Please send responses to mark.allen@bristol.gov.uk

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My knowledge around responding to mental health concerns has increased				
My confidence around responding to mental health concerns has increased				
I have learnt something new to apply to my own wellbeing				

Any other comments:

Your name and organisation:

THRIVE BRISTOL

Improving mental health for all