

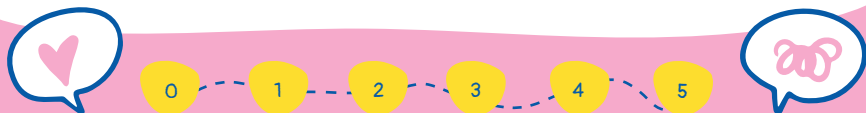
FACE YOUR MIND

BREAK THE SILENCE



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HEY THERE, HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?



0 – Relaxed: muscles are floppy. I breathe slowly and I enjoy what I'm doing.

1 – A bit nervous: butterflies in my tummy.

2 – Really nervous: lots of butterflies in my tummy. Thoughts pop into my head about things that could go wrong.

3 – Anxious: I feel a bit sick; my breathing gets quicker. I fidget with my hair and bite my nails.

4 – Really anxious: my breathing gets quicker and my heart beats fast. I can't sit still and I fidget.

5 – Meltdown: My heart thumps in my chest, I breathe really quickly. Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I get angry.

MENTAL HEALTH AND I

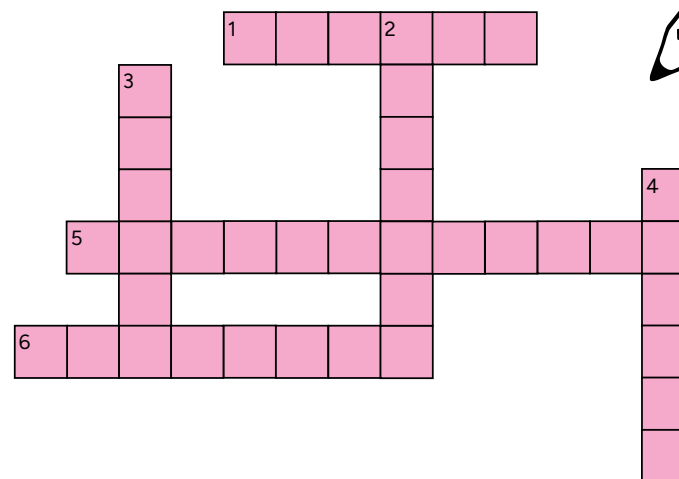
Are you aware of your well-being? Do you think mental health issues are a common issue in your age? Let's see together!

- For me, mental health is...
 - a bit like our physical health but in our mind.
 - influenced by the environment, biological factors and our socio-economic status.
 - contributes to our general well-being.
- How comfortable am I discussing my mental health with my friends and/or relatives?
 - I talk about it regularly.
 - When people ask about it, I answer.
 - I prefer not to, it's private.

- I take more care of my physical health than my mental health.
 - Yes, a healthy body is the key.
 - No, I value my mental health above all.
 - I treat them equally.

- Have you ever been facing a mental health disorder?
 - I'm not exactly sure what it is.
 - Yes, I have.
 - No, or I don't think so.

THE CROSSWORD OF MENTAL HEALTH



- Uncontrollable fear for certain objects or beings that don't present a real danger.
- Mental disorder characterised by alternating periods of particularly high mood with periods of depression.
- A sudden, violent and intense feeling of worry or fear.
- Set of reactions that occur when a person is subjected to pressure.
- Professional who supports patients with psychological difficulties.
- A disturbance in the functioning of a person's mind.

1. Phobia / 2. Bipolar / 3. Crisis / 4. Stress / 5. Psychologist / 6. Disorder

WHAT ARE STEREOTYPES?

Stereotypes are simplified ideas or beliefs about groups of people that may not be true.

They can be based on things like how someone looks or where they come from. Stereotypes aren't fair, and they can lead to misunderstandings.

It's **important to question them**, especially when it comes to things like mental health, to make sure everyone gets treated with kindness and understanding.

Let's check some together!



"IF SOMEONE HAS A PANIC ATTACK, IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH."

Reality: Anyone can experience a panic attack, and it's not a sign of weakness.

"IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED, IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT TRYING HARD ENOUGH TO BE HAPPY."

Reality: Depression isn't about not trying; it involves many factors, and it's okay to ask for help.

"ONLY 'CRAZY' OR 'UNSTABLE' PEOPLE GO TO THERAPY."

Reality: Going to therapy enables you to discover more about yourself, and to navigate life's challenges. It's not just for specific kinds of people; anyone can find it helpful.

"ONLY GIRLS STRUGGLE WITH EATING DISORDERS."

Reality: Eating disorders can affect anyone, regardless of gender, and it's important to be aware of the signs.

"SOCIAL ANXIETY IS JUST SHYNESS; PEOPLE SHOULD JUST GET OVER IT."

Reality: Social anxiety involves intense fear of judgement and social situations, and it's not a matter of simply being shy.

"PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES CAN'T BE PRODUCTIVE OR CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY."

Reality: In truth, many individuals with mental health conditions lead awesome lives, have jobs, and make a difference in their communities. Having mental health challenges doesn't mean you can't achieve great things and be a valuable part of the world. Everybody can get the best out of their life.



MENTAL
HEALTH
DISORDERS
DON'T HAVE
A FACE

WHAT IS SELF-HARM?

Self-harm refers to the intentional, direct injuring of one's own body without the intent to die. It is often a way for individuals to cope with emotional pain, stress, or other overwhelming feelings. Common methods of self-harm include cutting, burning, biting, hitting, or other forms of intentional injury.



HOW CAN I RECOGNISE SOMEONE MAY BE SELF-HARMING?

Signs of self-harm can vary, and it's not always easy to recognise. However, some common indicators include:

- ★ unexplained cuts or bruises
- ★ frequent isolation
- ★ emotional instability

QUESTION

Are you aware of your triggers?
How do you cope with them?

WHY MIGHT SOMEONE HARM THEMSELF?

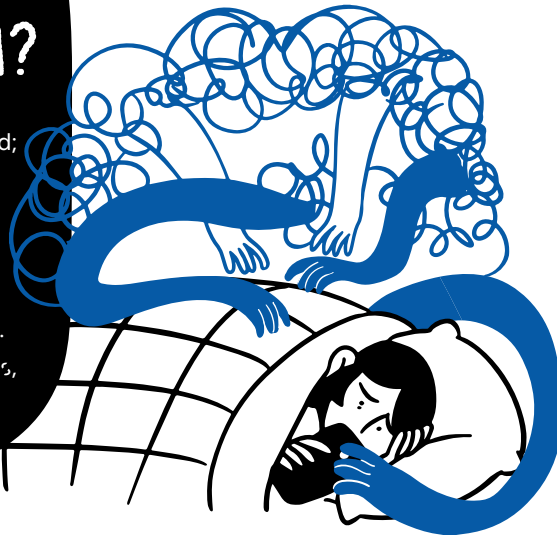
Self-harm can be linked to various factors, and individuals may engage in self-harming behaviours for different reasons. It's important to note that self-harm is often a coping mechanism rather than a solution to underlying problems. Some common reasons why someone might self-harm include:

- ★ emotional pain
- ★ coping with trauma
- ★ self-punishment

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is more than just feeling sad; **it's a pervasive and persistent emotional state that affects your daily life.**

It involves a deep sense of despair, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed. Depression can influence your thoughts, emotions, and physical well-being.



WHAT IS A DEPRESSIVE EPISODE?

A depressive episode is **an intense and prolonged period** marked by overwhelming sadness, lethargy, and a diminished sense of self-worth. It extends beyond typical mood fluctuations, impacting daily functioning. Symptoms include disrupted sleep patterns, appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, and persistent fatigue. Sometimes depression is difficult to recognise, symptoms are not so easily visible.

HOW CAN I RECOGNISE DEPRESSION?

You might have depression if...

- ... you feel very sad, hopeless or worried.
- ... you have low energy or fatigue.
- ... you are not enjoying things that used to bring joy.
- ... you have constant tiredness and difficulty focusing.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a normal emotion that everyone feels. It's that uneasy, worrisome feeling you get in certain situations. It can make you feel on edge, lead to overthinking, and cause physical symptoms like sweating or a racing heart. Anxiety is like your body's way of reacting to stress or a perceived threat.

Sometimes, anxiety is linked to a fear of judgement or a constant worry about the future. It's a bit like your body's "fight or flight" response kicking in, even in non-threatening situations.



WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK?

A panic attack is a sudden and intense surge of fear with physical symptoms like a rapid heartbeat or shortness of breath. It usually lasts a few minutes and is not physically harmful.

HOW CAN I RECOGNISE A PANIC ATTACK?

You might have a panic attack if...

- ... you feel anxiety and fear out of nowhere
- ... you have a racing heartbeat
- ... you have short breaths and dizziness

QUESTION

How do you manage stressful situations? Do you have a method to reduce stress?

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA?

It is a **strong and lasting** psychological trauma caused by **intense experiences** and dramatic events.

Traumas can be caused by various factors:

- ★ war trauma
- ★ childhood trauma
- ★ domestic, peer violence
- ★ death of a loved one, divorce
- ★ trauma after an accident, an assault or a rape
- ★ trauma after a disaster or natural event



HOW CAN I RECOGNISE THE SIGNS OF TRAUMA?

- ★ so-called flashbacks, i.e. "re-experiencing" the dramatic events that triggered the psychological trauma
- ★ panic attacks
- ★ nightmares and consequent insomnia
- ★ depressed mood, crying

- ★ avoidance of situations that remind one of the stressors
- ★ suicidal thoughts

QUESTION

Have you experienced any dramatic events?
Do you observe the symptoms in your mood and health such as described above?
How do you help yourself?
Do you have a habit which helps you?

WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

We talk about eating disorders when it concerns the relationship of a person with food, their weight, their physical appearance or physical activities.

Eating disorders are not dietary tantrums, they are a **disease and have to be taken seriously**. They have consequent impacts on health and can lead to:

- ★ Psychological distress;
- ★ Impacts on daily life;
- ★ And even death.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

- ★ anorexia; an intentional loss of weight through extreme behaviours
- ★ bulimia; a loss of control through a craving for eating a lot and fast but compensated with extreme behaviours to counter weight gain
- ★ binge-eating disorder; a loss of control through craving for eating a lot and fast without a compensatory behaviour to lose weight

QUESTION

How have you felt lately regarding your physical appearance?
Have you changed anything in your food diet recently?



I WANT TO HELP

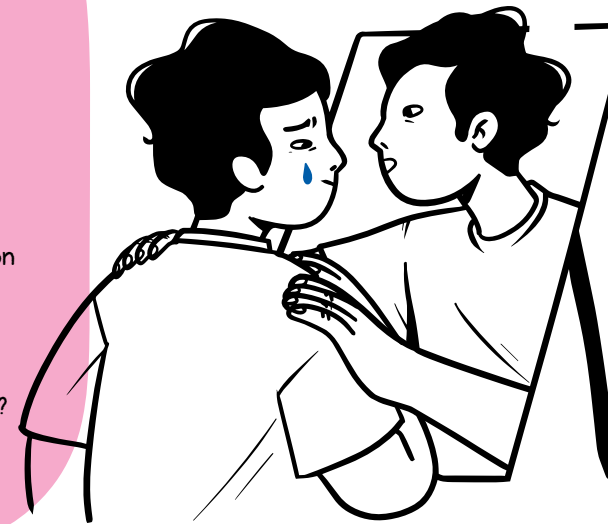
When seeing a friend or relative facing mental health disorders, it's normal to experience various emotions and feel lost.

Remember, you are not a therapist, but here are some tips on which behaviour you could adopt:

- ★ Don't make any promises that you can't keep, the person can have the impression to be abandoned or not worth of attention;
- ★ If the person might be in danger, don't keep it secret even though the person asks you for it: their safety first;
- ★ Listen actively, don't interrupt the person with your personal stories or viewpoint;
- ★ Avoid debates and personal judgement on the person's disorder: they need support not moral;
- ★ Encourage professional help: Suggest that your friend seek help from a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counsellor.
- ★ Respect their privacy: Understand that your friend may not be ready to share all the details of their struggles. Respect their boundaries.
- ★ Stay connected and be patient: Offer ongoing support by checking in on your friend regularly.

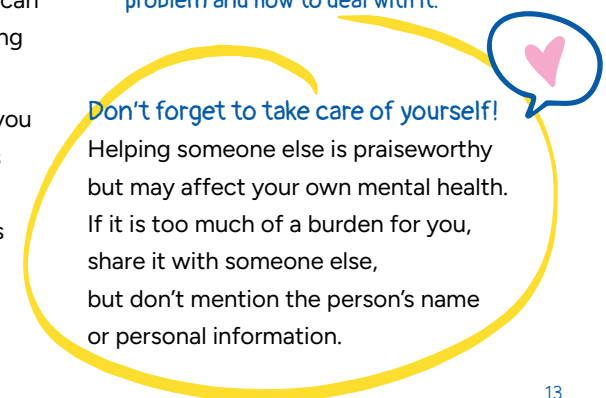
METHODS TO HELP YOURSELF

Feeling worse than usual?
Have you encountered a difficult situation that you are unable to cope with?
Do you feel moody?
Do you struggle to focus, or even to perform activities that you usually enjoy?
You are not alone, there are ways to get back to your inner balance.



- ★ **Hobbies**, favourite activities allow you to take your mind off your troubles. Some psychologists say it's a good idea to "cook the soup", i.e. focus on a particular activity.
- ★ **Exercise**. Physical activity releases so-called happiness hormones (endorphins). Running, gym, fitness and other sports or even a walk can put a smile on your face and bring you joy.
- ★ Meeting **positive people** gives you a dose of energy, conversations distract you from sad thoughts and improve your mood. Friends allow you to express your pain, to complain.

- ★ An excellent method, still not so common, is **bibliotherapy**. It allows you to gain psychological support, reduce stress and feelings of loneliness or exclusion.
- ★ **Never, ever be afraid or ashamed to contact a specialist!** They are able to help you understand how to face your problem and how to deal with it.



Don't forget to take care of yourself!
Helping someone else is praiseworthy but may affect your own mental health. If it is too much of a burden for you, share it with someone else, but don't mention the person's name or personal information.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

Many celebrities and public figures have openly shared their experiences with mental health challenges to reduce stigma and raise awareness.

These testimonies highlight that **mental health issues can affect anyone, regardless of fame or success**. Sharing personal stories helps break down stigma and encourages others to seek help when needed. It's important to remember that mental health is a common human experience, and seeking support is a sign of strength. Don't be ashamed to seek help.



PRINCE HARRY

Prince Harry, a member of the British royal family, has spoken about his own mental health struggles, particularly in dealing with the grief of losing his mother, Princess Diana. He, along with his brother Prince William and Duchess Kate, launched the Heads Together campaign to promote mental health awareness.



DEMI LOVATO

The singer and actress Demi Lovato has been vocal about her struggles with bipolar disorder, self-harm, and addiction. She has been an advocate for mental health awareness and encourages others to seek help.



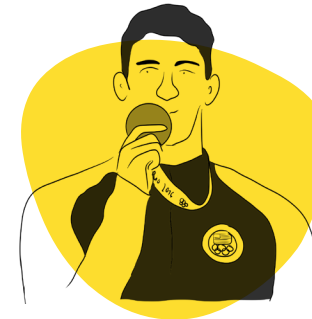
AMANDA SEYFRIED

Actress Amanda Seyfried has spoken about her struggles with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and anxiety. She emphasises the importance of seeking therapy and medication when needed.



LADY GAGA

Lady Gaga has opened up about her experiences with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from sexual assault. She founded the Born This Way Foundation, which focuses on mental health issues among young people.



MICHAEL PHELPS

Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps has been candid about his struggles with depression and anxiety. He has used his platform to raise awareness about mental health issues, particularly among athletes.

These celebrities have shared their stories to contribute to a broader conversation about mental health, reduce stigma, and encourage others to seek help when needed. Their openness helps create a more understanding and supportive environment for those facing mental health challenges.



WHERE CAN I FIND HELP?

112 (EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER)

WHERE CAN I FIND
FURTHER RESOURCES?

If you would like to know more on the topic of mental health and the different disorders, you can check our interactive comics on our website:

breaking-taboos.eu



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