

KEY FACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health refers to our cognitive, behavioural and emotional wellbeing - it is all about how we think, feel, and behave. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices.

Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

A medically diagnosable illness which can result from a number of factors including biological or developmental. It can affect the way we feel, act and think and disrupts our ability to work or carry out other daily activities and engage in satisfying personal relationships. It can be managed through prevention, diagnosis, treatment and mental health recovery.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY?

Mental health recovery means being able to live a good life, as defined by the individual, with or without symptoms. It is a unique and personal experience that can have its ups and downs. Mental health recovery focusses on what a person CAN do rather than on what they can't. It is not necessarily easy or straightforward. Many people describe the need to persevere and to find ways to maintain hope through the most trying times.

PARITY OF ESTEEM

The principle by which mental health must be given equal priority to physical health. It was enshrined in law in 2012. The government requires NHS England to work for parity of esteem to mental and physical health through the NHS Mandate. This has still not yet been realised.

KEY FACTS ON MENTAL ILLNESS:

- One in six adults experienced some form of depression in summer 2021 (21 July to 15 August, Great Britain), compared with one in ten before the pandemic (July 2019 to March 2020). (ONS, 2021)
- Rates of probable mental disorder increased between 2017 and 2021 in 6 to 16 year olds from one in nine to one in six and in 17 to 19 year olds from one in ten to one in six. (NHS Digital, 2021)
- In 2020 there were 5224 suicides registered in England and Wales (10.0 deaths per 100,000 people). This is significantly lower than the 2019 rate, likely due to a decrease in male suicides at the start of the pandemic and delays in death registrations because of the pandemic. (ONS, 2021)
- In a National Union of Students poll of 4,000 students, 52% reported that their mental health had deteriorated or been affected negatively by Covid-19. However only 29% of those had looked for help. (nus student survey, 2020)
- In a survey investigating how the COVID-19 pandemic affected Jews across the UK a clear trend was seen with respect to synagogue membership. Mental distress is notably higher among those who are not synagogue members than among those who are. (JPR Hidden Effects Survey, July 2020)
- Impact on wellbeing and lack of freedom and independence remain the ways life is most affected by the pandemic for adults experiencing some form of depression. (ONS, 2021)

NHS 5 WAYS TO WELLBEING

Evidence suggests there are five steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing.

If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.



CONNECT

Connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.



BE ACTIVE

You don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.



KEEP LEARNING

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?



GIVE TO OTHERS

Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.



BE MINDFUL

Be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Practising each of the five ways to wellbeing every day can have a very positive impact on your mood and wellbeing. These are also things which are encouraged in the Jewish tradition.

The Five Ways to Good Mental Wellbeing & Judaism has been designed by Good Thinking in collaboration with Jami, in consultation with Rabbi Miriam Berger and Rabbi Daniel Epstein, with the support of The London Jewish Forum, Maccabi GB and the London Borough of Barnet.

You can read the full leaflet [here](#).

LEARNING FROM LOCKDOWN

The past 20+ months have been challenging for all of us; in a variety of ways. How we experienced Covid-19 and lockdown run the spectrum of human experience. And so will our ability to recover and rebuild. For some of us it feels like the pandemic is over and the world has gone back to normal. But for others of us Covid-19 continues to colour our everyday experiences, impacting our physical and mental health. As we begin 2022, it's important to acknowledge and normalise differing reactions to post-pandemic life. There is no one size fits all here or timeline to finding our feet in the 'new normal'.

Covid-19 has made many of us acutely aware of how life can change in an instant. It's taught us to live in uncertainty and to manage frequent change. There are important life lessons that we can learn here. By learning from our experiences of the pandemic we can build our resilience. What can we take forward with us? Learning from the past year to build a new future for ourselves.

Pace Ourselves

In periods of change it's important to pace ourselves giving us time to acclimatise and adapt. We all have our own pace. So, it's important not to compare our ability to change with those around us. A gradual approach to a new situation can protect our wellbeing.

We are Resilient

Covid-19 was a curve ball. It knocked many of us off the path our lives were taking. Creating obstacles many of us never considered having to cope with. It impacted almost everyone's physical and mental health to some degree. And yet, we adapted to the changing world around us in ways we never thought we would, or even could. We problem-solved in a daily, weekly or monthly basis on a scale many of us have never had to.

Connection is Valuable

Pre-pandemic it was easy to take our community or connectivity for granted. We underestimated the importance of having people around us. Of feeling a part of something. It's vital that we rebuild and retain these connections going forward. We thrive as humans when we work with others. We are greater than the sum of our parts. Not only because we maximise our potential to achieve and pool our resources, but because as humans we need the opportunity to socialise. To speak and be listened to. To have people around us with whom we can share our thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Take Time to Process

Whether big or small, we all need to process what happens to us and there is no fixed timeline for this. We can't rush ourselves. Instead, we need to normalise everyone taking their own time to work out their thoughts and feelings about their experiences of Covid-19. Not only are timelines for processing individualised, so is the way we process. Some of us may prefer to process alone. Perhaps taking time to think or channelling our thoughts creatively through writing, art or music. Others will prefer to process with others. Whether that's with a group or one to one, with friends, family, colleagues or a medical professional.

Reach Out for Support

Lastly, whatever our post-pandemic experiences, it is important to be mindful of the impact this change may have on us and be kind to ourselves. Part of this is taking things slowly, investing in self-care, knowing our limits and checking in with our mental health. How are we finding things? What is difficult or easier than expected? Are we ready to push ourselves or do we need to take a step back? And most of all, do we know where to turn if we need support?



WHERE TO GET HELP WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

If you or someone you know needs mental health help there are a variety of options depending on the issue of concern.

- **Jami Qwell** – free, safe, anonymous mental health counselling and online support, from the UK's leading online mental health platform. To find out more go to qwell.io/jami
- **SHOUT** – 24/7 crisis text service – Text **Jami** to **85258**
- **Jami** is here to help with mental health support: jamiuk.org/get-support/referral, call **020 8458 2223** or email info@jamiuk.org
- **Ring your GP or out of hours service for an emergency appointment**
- **Contact your Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) if you have one**
- **Samaritans** – Call Samaritans on Freephone **116 123** (24 hours a day)
- For young people under 35, or if you are worried about a young person, please call **Papyrus** – a charity which runs the **HopelineUK** – on **0800 068 41 41**, text **07786209697** or email pat@papyrus-uk.org
- Call **999** or **NHS Direct** on **111** (England) or **0845 46 47** (Wales)
- **Jewish Helpline** on **0800 652 9249** (Sunday – Thursday 12:00 – 00:00; Friday 12:00 – 15:00)
- Don't hesitate to call **999** in mental health emergencies

