



# Mental wellbeing guide

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“Support that works”

A guide to supporting a family member or friend.

Practical care, lasting support

“Supporting families with heart”.



# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Introduction and welcome:

Thank you for downloading this guide. If you're here, it means you care deeply about someone in your family who may be feeling overwhelmed, struggling with their mental health, or simply going through a difficult time—and that's a powerful first step. I'm Richard McQuirke, a Counsellor and founder of Secure Cortex. At Secure Cortex, we focus on delivering short, practical workshops that make a real difference to mental wellbeing—quickly, effectively, and sustainably. This guide is an extension of that mission. Inside, you'll find straightforward, evidence-based strategies to help you support your loved one in a way that feels natural, respectful, and empowering. These tools aren't about becoming a therapist—they're about being present, patient, and grounded in real care. When used consistently, even small actions can have a big impact.

Because when our families feel supported, we all grow stronger—together.

*"Be the strength beside them."*



# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Supporting a family member.

### Introduction

Supporting a family member with mental health difficulties can be challenging. Most people don't have any training in mental health and watching a loved one struggle, can feel very worrying and overwhelming. It is normal in this situation to feel helpless and clueless but there are several things you can do to help both them and yourself. Here are some reassuring tips for those providing support:

SECURE CORTEX

"Support starts with you."

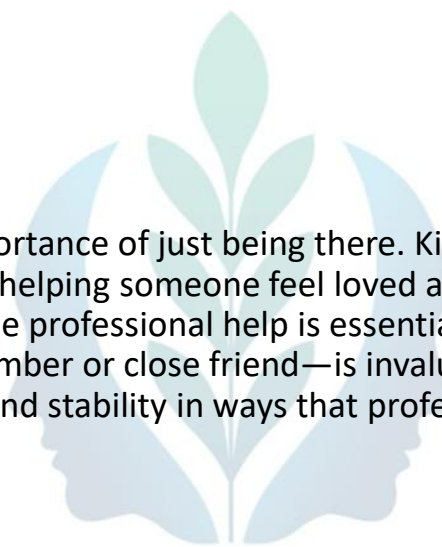


# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Strength in support.

Firstly, never underestimate the importance of just being there. Kindness, patience and gentle reassurance can be very powerful in helping someone feel loved and supported as well as being a vital source of comfort and strength. While professional help is essential, the role of a non-mental health trained person—such as a family member or close friend—is invaluable. These individuals often offer emotional support, understanding, and stability in ways that professionals cannot always provide.



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*"Simply being there matters."*

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## The power of presence.

A loved one's presence can make a significant difference in reducing feelings of isolation, providing a safe space to talk, and encouraging the person to seek further help. The support of a family member helps to maintain a sense of connection and normalcy, which can be crucial in managing mental health challenges. Even without formal training, offering empathy, active listening, and patience can foster a positive and healing environment.

Ultimately, non-professional support can be a crucial element in the overall recovery journey, reminding individuals that they are not alone in their struggles. It's important to remember that your care, compassion, and encouragement can be just as impactful as any formal treatment.

SECURE CORTEX

*"Your presence has power."*

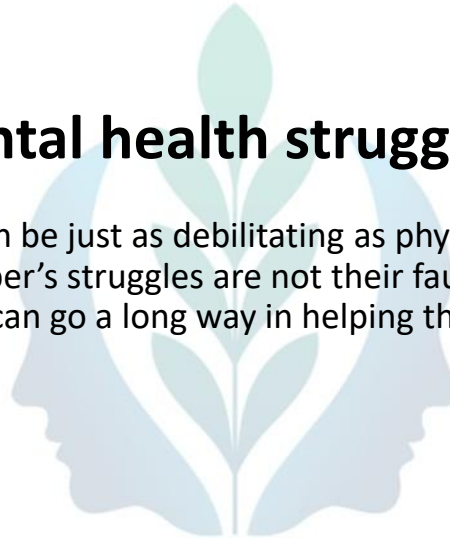


# Mental wellbeing guide

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## **Understand that mental health struggles are valid.**

Mental health issues are real and can be just as debilitating as physical health problems. It's important to remember that your family member's struggles are not their fault, and they are not choosing to feel this way. Compassion and empathy can go a long way in helping them feel understood.



# SECURE CORTEX

*"Understanding begins with empathy."*



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## Educate yourself about mental health.

Learn about the specific mental health condition your family member is facing (if known). There are many resources available from organisations like Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, and the Mental Health Foundation. Understanding more about the condition, can help you better empathise with what they are going through and reduce feelings of frustration or confusion.



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*"Informed support matters."*



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## Be a Good Listener.

One of the most powerful ways you can support a family member is by simply listening. Often, they don't need solutions or advice—they just need to feel heard. Create a safe, non-judgmental space where they can share their thoughts and emotions freely. Give them your full attention, avoid interrupting, and resist the urge to “fix” things. Your presence, patience, and willingness to listen without pressure can offer a deep sense of comfort, validation, and connection. Sometimes, just knowing someone is truly listening can make all the difference.

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*“Healing Through Connection.”*





# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Encourage Professional Help – With Care and Patience.

your family member hasn't yet sought professional support, gently encourage them to do so. You might suggest starting with their GP, looking into local counselling services, or reaching out to trusted mental health organisations such as Samaritans, Mind, or Rethink Mental Illness. These professionals and services can offer the kind of targeted support and treatment that can make a significant difference. However, it's crucial to remember that timing matters. Pushing too hard, even with the best intentions, can feel overwhelming or even discouraging. Instead, focus on being patient and understanding. Let them know you're there for them no matter what, and that seeking help is a strength—not a weakness. Sometimes just knowing they have your support can make taking that first step feel a little less daunting.

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*"Support the step forward."*

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## Take Care of Your Own Mental Health.

Supporting a loved one through mental health challenges can be deeply rewarding—but it can also be emotionally exhausting. It's important to remember that your wellbeing matters too. Taking care of yourself isn't a luxury; it's a necessity that enables you to be there for others in a sustainable way. Make space for regular breaks and activities that recharge you—whether that's a walk, a hobby, or simply some quiet time. Reach out and talk openly with trusted friends or family members about how you're feeling.

Don't hesitate to seek professional support if you need it; many organisations, such as Carers UK, provide valuable resources specifically designed for those caring for someone with mental health difficulties. By prioritising your own mental health, you're not only protecting yourself but also become a stronger, more resilient source of support for your loved one.

*"Your wellbeing matters too."*



# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Create a Supportive Environment.

One of the most meaningful ways to help your loved one is by creating a calm, safe, and nurturing space where they feel truly comfortable and accepted. This might involve minimizing potential stressors or triggers within the home—such as loud noises, clutter, or frequent conflicts—and being mindful of how your words and actions affect their emotional state. Pay attention to the atmosphere you're cultivating: a quiet, stable environment can provide much-needed relief and help your loved one feel grounded and secure. Simple gestures like maintaining routines, offering gentle reassurance, and practicing patience can all contribute to making your home a sanctuary where healing and coping become a little easier.

Remember, the environment you create isn't just physical—it's emotional too. Showing consistent kindness, understanding, and respect helps build trust and encourages your loved one to open up when they need support the most.

*"Creating calm, building strength."*

# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Encourage Healthy Habits.

Supporting your loved one in adopting healthy habits can play a significant role in improving their mental wellbeing. While it's important to avoid pressure or judgment, gently encouraging simple routines—like eating regular, balanced meals, engaging in some form of physical activity, and maintaining a consistent sleep schedule—can help create a foundation for better emotional health. Offer your support in a patient and understanding way, acknowledging that change takes time and that setbacks are normal. You might invite them to join you for a walk, help prepare a nutritious meal together, or establish a relaxing bedtime routine. These small, caring actions can foster a sense of stability and self-care, which are vital during difficult times. Remember, your encouragement and gentle presence can motivate them to take these positive steps at their own pace, building habits that support long-term wellbeing.

*"Gentle encouragement, lasting change."*

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## Know the emergency options.

If your family member is in crisis or at risk of harm, know the emergency contact details:

NHS 111 can be contacted for urgent mental health support.

Samaritans offers confidential support 24/7 (call **\*\*116 123\*\***).

**In an emergency, don't hesitate to call **\*\*999\*\*** or go to A&E.**

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Details of other help and support organisations further on in this guide.



# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Be realistic with expectations.

Be Patient and Set Realistic Expectations. Recovery and improvement in mental health are often gradual processes that require time, understanding, and patience. It's important to recognise that progress rarely follows a straight path—there will be ups and downs, good days and setbacks. This is a natural part of the healing journey, not a sign of failure. By setting realistic expectations, you can avoid frustration for both yourself and your loved one. Celebrate the small victories and milestones, no matter how minor they may seem, and offer gentle support during tougher times. Remember, your patience and consistent encouragement can provide the stability and hope your family member needs to keep moving forward—even when progress feels slow or uneven.

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*"Progress isn't perfect."*



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## **Remember you are not alone.**

Many people are facing similar challenges. Support groups like Rethink Mental Illness and Mind offer a sense of community for family members of those with mental health difficulties—connecting you with others who truly understand what you're going through.

Supporting someone with their mental health can sometimes feel isolating, and you may even feel invisible in the process. But please know this: your care, presence, and patience matter deeply. Even if it's not always acknowledged, you are making a difference.

By offering understanding and compassion, you're playing a vital role in their journey. Just remember—supporting someone else doesn't mean neglecting yourself. Your wellbeing is just as important.

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# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Details of help and support organisations:

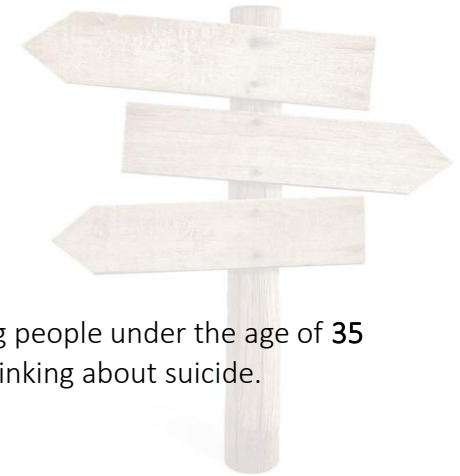
[Samaritans](#): (suicide prevention) call **116 123**

[Papyrus](#): (suicide prevention) A confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. The helpline number is **0800 068 4141** and is open from 9AM to midnight every day. You can also text them on 077862 09697 or email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

[CALM](#): (suicide prevention) is an organisation which offers help, information and advice to anyone. They deal with issues such as abuse, bullying, mental health, relationships, suicide and self-harm. The CALM helpline is open every day from 5PM – 12AM (midnight) on **0800 58 58 58**. You can webchat with them via their website or via WhatsApp. [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

### Shout:

Shout: (Suicide prevention) Offers a free, 24/7 [confidential messaging service](#) for anyone who is struggling to cope. Text the word 'Shout' to **85258**. Shout is a de-escalation service operated by trained, shout volunteers who work with people in distress to take them to a calmer moment and empower them to take next steps to feeling better and handle future issues. *Note: this is a text messaging service only.*





# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Details of help and support organisations:

### National Domestic Abuse Helpline:

24-hour freephone operated by Refuge and staffed by female advisors.

They can be contacted on **0800 2000 247** and are open 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day.

Alternatively, you can send a message via a form on the website with details of how and when someone can get in touch with you safely. They also operate a webchat which is open Monday to Friday 3PM-10PM. [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

### Childline:

Offers information, advice and confidential counselling to anyone aged 18 or under on any issue affecting them.

Their phoneline is open all day every day by calling on **0800 1111**, or you can go to [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) to access their webchat service.

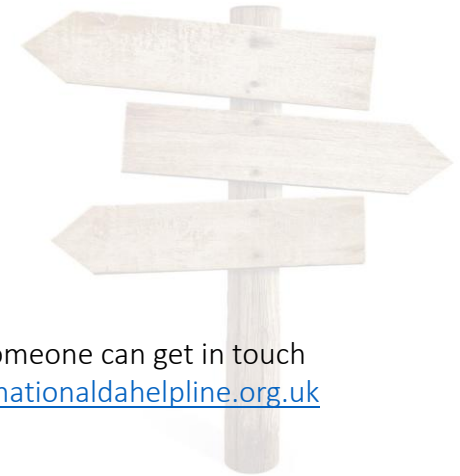
You can visit their website to access more information on them or send an email using a Childline account.

### SP-UK:

SP-UK: (Suicide prevention) National Suicide prevention helpline UK Offers a compassionate and understanding lifeline for those struggling with mental well-being or having suicidal thoughts.

Their helpline is open every day from 6PM-midnight.

To speak to a dedicated volunteer, you can call them on **0808 689 5652**. They also have a good website with useful information. [www.spuk.org.uk](http://www.spuk.org.uk)



# Mental wellbeing guide

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## Details of help and support organisations:

[Victim Support](#): (victims of crime) Offers emotional and practical support, advice and information to people affected by crime, including their friends, family and any other people involved.

Their helpline is free and confidential, and available 24/7 on **0808 16 89 111**

On their website you can also chat to them online or find the details for services in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

[Beat](#): (eating disorders) Offers support and information for people affected by eating disorders.

Their helpline is open every day from 9AM-midnight during the week, and 4PM-midnight on weekends.

You can call them on 0808 801 0677, or their Youthline on **0808 801 0711**.

They also have a webchat service available Monday to Thursday from 8PM to midnight.

[Galop](#): (LGBT+ support) is an LGBT + anti-abuse charity working with and for LGBT+ victims and survivors of interpersonal abuse and violence. They also support people supporting a survivor of domestic abuse; friends, families and those working with a survivor.

You can contact their helpline on **0800 999 5428** and it's open Monday to Friday 10AM-5PM and Wednesday and Thursday 10 AM-8PM.

