

MANAGING EMOTIONS



*Techniques for Coping
in Times of Struggle*

About Emotions

Everyone experiences distressing emotions to some degree throughout life. This is because it is essential for our survival. For example, when we feel frightened, that emotion tells us that something might be a threat to our wellbeing and allows us to respond in a way that keeps us safe. When we feel happy, such as when with a friend or relative, that emotion tells us we find it enjoyable and it is good for us.

Sometimes we find ways to deal with our emotions that seem helpful but they can start to get out of hand and cause more problems. For example, if we avoid things when we feel scared or anxious eventually, we might find we are avoiding things that we used to enjoy and as a result, feel isolated and sad. As a result, we lose confidence in our ability to cope when we have to confront those situations and it confirms our beliefs that we can't cope and we should avoid them...and so the vicious cycle continues until we feel hopeless.

It is important to understand how these difficulties have come about so you and your psychologist/therapist can understand how your emotions work for you and what might help to manage them.

In this booklet are a series of techniques that can be helpful and it is advisable to have a go at the ones that appeal to you and notice which work best in different situations. For any technique to be effective it is important to practice using them.

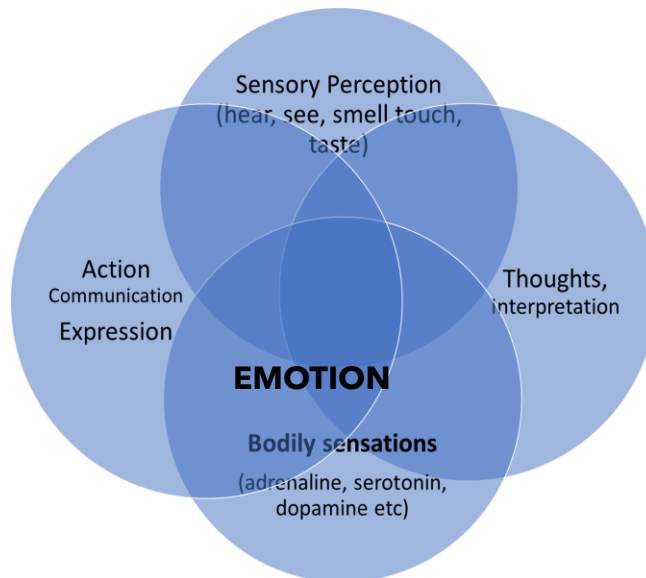
Noticing Your Emotions and Understanding What You Feel

What is an Emotion??

When we say 'emotion' we are describing a process.

This process involves internal/external perceptions, our interpretations or thoughts about them, the resulting physiological responses and felt sense of those in our body, and our expression, communication or action.

This is shown below



It is though that there are 6 basic universal emotions:

1. Fear
2. Disgust
3. Anger
4. Surprise
5. Happiness
6. Sadness



All people feel these emotions and combinations of these create other emotions.

The following videos summarise this information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNY0AAUth3g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJOjpprbfeE>

People experience emotions in response to something that is important to them personally, so it makes sense that your previous experiences, upbringing and culture influence what you feel.

How can we tell what emotions we are feeling and why?

It can be helpful to notice what your physical bodily sensations are:

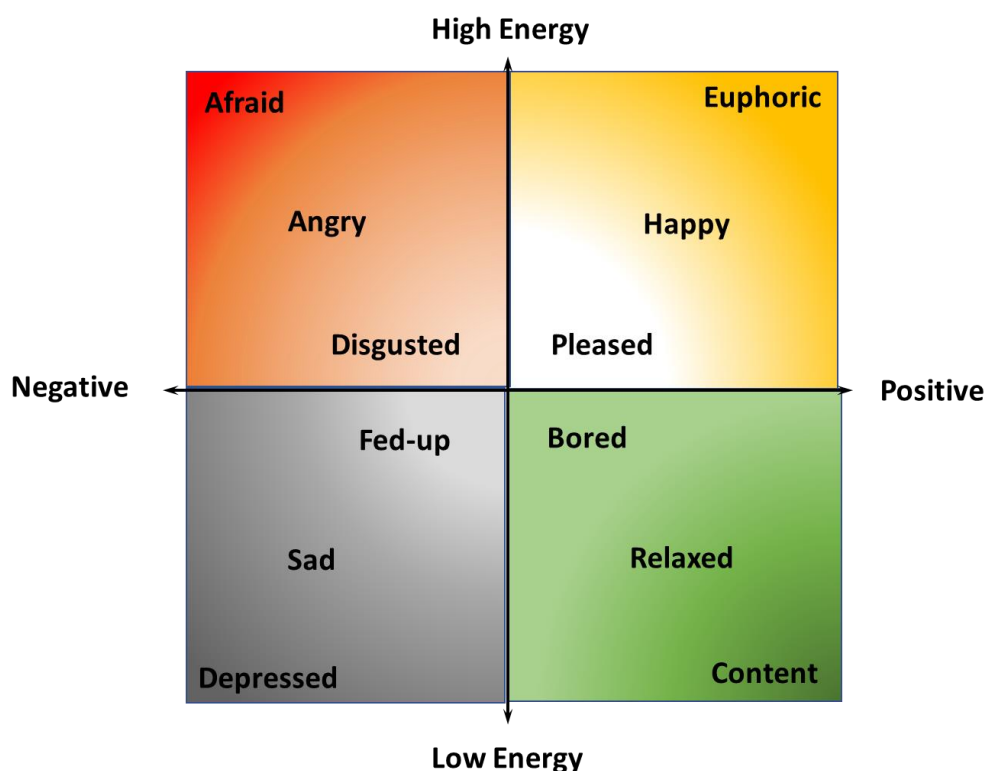
- When did I start to feel like this? E.g. talking to my boss
- Where do I feel physical sensations? E.g. chest
- How can I describe it? E.g. heart pounding
- What was I thinking? E.g. my boss thinks I'm lazy
- What was I trying to do? E.g. prove to my boss that I am working hard

Sometimes it can be very hard to work out what we are feeling, especially when our mind is racing with lots of thoughts or we feel lots of emotions at once.

In these situations, the following model might help. It is based on the level of energy or arousal the emotion seems to have and its tone or quality (i.e. if it feels pleasant or unpleasant).

Broadly speaking:

- High energy emotions are fear, anger, euphoria and happiness.
- Low energy emotions are those like depression and contentment.
- Negative emotions are fear and depression.
- Positive emotions are those such as happiness and contentment.



There will be other emotions you could put on it too.

Managing Emotions

General tips for good self-care

Good self-care is the best start to managing emotions because it maintains a good basic level of physical and emotional health and wellbeing. Here are some basic tips:

- Develop a routine to get enough sleep by having a quiet bedtime; go to bed at the same time most nights (avoid caffeinated drinks late in the day) and get up at a similar time in the morning.
- Exercise as often as you can and spend time outdoors - even a walk to the shop or with a dog (but ask the owner first!)
- Schedule in fun, enjoyment and relaxation as often as you can
- Eat a healthily regularly, including:
 - Small meals and often
 - Some fresh food each day (not all convenience)
 - Avoid too much sugar or caffeine (which can increase symptoms of anxiety due to a build of arousal and then a 'crash')
- Try to have 2 alcohol free days each week (and aim to cut out illegal drug use)
- Learn to say no! Don't take on too much or allow people to talk you into doing things you don't enjoy
- Schedule in a little 'me' time to have your own space and freedom to do as you wish (even just sit quietly)
- Try to do something you enjoy each day - even if this is watching your favourite TV program or YouTube channel for an hour (but avoid doing these things all day!)

COGNITIVE TECHNIQUES TO COPE WITH DISTRESSING EMOTIONS

Refocus Your Attention

1. Read a magazine or book
2. Do mental arithmetic (e.g. counting backwards in 7's or 13's)
3. Try Sudoku, crosswords or word-search
4. Recite funny rhymes or favourite poems in your mind
5. Recall a place you have been that was interesting and enjoyable
6. Think of what you are looking forward to in the day or week
7. Visualisation/imagery - sometimes a prop can help e.g. a postcard or photo (see below)

Give yourself some time off worrying each day

Say to yourself '***I'm postponing this worry***' each day for increasing amounts time: start with 30 seconds or 1 minute, then 2 minutes, 3 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes..... up to 1 hour (use a timer if this helps).

Go at your own pace (it isn't a competition!) or you might find you're even more anxious.

Safe Place Imagery

Begin by taking some deep, soothing breaths just to begin to slow yourself down. When you are ready, try to create a place in your mind - a place that could give you a feeling of safety and calmness.

Imagine looking around you; what can you see? It might be a peaceful wood where the leaves of the trees dance gently in the breeze. You might imagine shafts of light falling through the canopy above to caress the ground with brightness. Or it might be a beautiful beach with a crystal blue sea stretching out to the horizon where it meets the sky, or relaxing next to an open fire.

Now focus on what you can feel, like the sensation of the sun on your face or a breeze stirring your hair. Or can you feel soft, white sand underfoot? Next, think about what you can hear. Can you hear the rustle of the leaves on the trees, or birds singing, or the fire crackling or the gentle breaking of the waves on the sand? Now think about whether you can smell anything, such as the salty smell of the sea or the smell of wood smoke, or a sweetness of the air.

When you bring your safe place to mind, allow your body to relax. Think about your facial expression; allow it to have a soft smile of pleasure at being there. Imagine that, *the place itself takes joy in you being there*. Allow yourself to feel how your safe place has pleasure in you being here. Explore your feelings when you imagine that this place is happy with you being there. Use your senses to enjoy being there - what do you see, feel, smell and hear...?

When you feel ready open your eyes and enjoy the feelings of warmth and calm that your safe place has left you with.

Using the Compassionate Scientist Method to Settle Your Anxious Thoughts and Fears

1. Look at the following list of thinking traps and try to identify some of those you tend to fall into when feeling anxious, depressed or afraid:
 - a) **Mental filter** - This thinking style involves a filtering in and filtering out process - a sort of tunnel vision, focusing on only 1 part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts, and the whole picture is coloured by what may be a single negative detail.
 - b) **Jumping to conclusions** - We jump to conclusions when we assume that we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) and
 - c) **Personalisation** - This involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong, even when you may only be partly responsible or not responsible at all. You might be taking 100 per cent responsibility for the occurrence of external events.
 - d) **Catastrophising** - Catastrophising occurs when we blow things out of proportion, and we view the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful, and horrible, even though the reality is that the problem is quite small.
 - e) **Black and white thinking** - This thinking style involves seeing only 1 extreme or the other. You are either wrong or right, good or bad and so on. There are no in-betweens or shades of grey.
 - f) **'Shoulding' and 'Musting'** - Sometimes by saying "I should..." or "I must..." you can put unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself and others. These statements are not always unhelpful - for example "I should not get drunk and drive home". But they can sometimes create unrealistic expectations and make it difficult to adapt to changes, especially if we feel we 'should' stick to certain rules or 'must' have total control.
 - g) **Overgeneralisation** - When we overgeneralise, we take 1 instance in the past or present, and impose it on all current or future situations. If we say "You always..." or "Everyone...", or "I never..." then we are probably overgeneralising.
 - h) **Labelling** - We label others and ourselves when we make global statements based on behaviour in specific situations. We might use this label even though there are many more examples that aren't consistent with that label. E.g. he/she is popular/successful.
 - i) **Emotional reasoning** - This thinking style involves basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling. For example, *the only evidence that something bad is going to happen is that you feel like something bad is going to happen* → you then act as though the bad thing will happen and believe it even more → the more you act this way, the more you believe it and feel the associated emotions increasing.
 - j) **Magnification and minimisation** - In this thinking style, you magnify the positive attributes of other people and minimise your own positive attributes. It's as though you're explaining away your own positive characteristics.

k) **Predicting the Future** - When we make predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking), which of course we cannot do! E.g. Everyone will hate me OR the bus/car/plane will crash and I will die.

2. Try to spot the thought that is triggering your anxiety and fear (e.g. I am going to lose control and look stupid in front of everyone)
3. Identify the thinking trap/traps you are slipping into with this thought (i.e. catastrophising, predicting the future)
4. Try to identify what evidence you are basing your thinking upon and ask yourself 2 things:
 - Is this valid evidence or another thinking trap e.g. overgeneralizing or ignoring the positive?
 - Is there any counter-evidence (evidence against my anxious thought) e.g. I have only ever lost control once and someone helped me, but nobody treated me like I was stupid.
5. Soothe your anxious/fearful/depressed thoughts by responding to them in a caring but wise manner as you might a frightened child (e.g. "I understand why you might be afraid and thinking these things. You have had some difficult experiences in the past and you got through them. Allow yourself to enjoy and make the most of this moment.")

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

Soothing Breathing

Sit comfortably, place both feet flat on the floor about shoulder's width apart and rest your hands on your legs. Close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you prefer and gently focus on your breathing.

As you breathe try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm (that's just at the bottom of your ribcage in the upside down 'V'). Feel your diaphragm, the area underneath your ribs, move as you breathe in and out. Just notice your breathing and play an experiment with your breathing. Breathe a little faster or a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. Link up, with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.

What you will usually find is that your breathing is slightly slower and deeper than normal. The in-breath is about 4 seconds ... hold ... and then take 4 seconds for the out-breath. Ensure that the breaths in and out are smooth and even. So, for example, notice if you're breathing in a bit too quickly or collapsing the out breath.

Spend as long as we wish - just focusing on your breathing, just noticing the breath coming down into the diaphragm, your diaphragm lifting and then the air moving out, through your nose. Sometimes it's useful to focus on the point just inside the nose where the air enters. So, in through your mouth and out from your nose, in through your mouth and out through your nose..... Just focus on that for a while.

Turn your attention to your body. Sense the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you. Allow yourself to feel held and supported, coming to rest, in the present moment....

Remember that it is fine for your mind to wander. Simply notice it happening with curiosity about where your mind has gone and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body as best as you can. Sense the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils....just gently observing....no need to change anything....just allowing things to be as they are.

If you find focusing on your breathing a bit difficult then allow your attention to rest on an object. Find something you might like to hold such as a smooth stone or a soft ball - something that gives you the feeling of gentleness and calmness. Now as you just focus on your breathing also focus on your object that you're holding noticing how it feels in your hand resting your gaze on your object as best as you can.... staying with the sensations of holding it in your hand.

When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. Sometimes it helps if you just have a gentle stretch and a deep breath to prepare you to carry on with your day.

Exercise and Activity

Being active often helps manage strong unpleasant moods. By being active we create our body's natural 'feel good' chemicals (e.g. endorphins) and this can calm frustration and anger and lift our mood if we feel low.

This can be especially helpful if we engage in activities with people we are comfortable with or animals, as this also stimulates our body to create the chemicals serotonin, natural opioids and oxytocin, which give us a feeling of calm, feeling connected and loved.

DOING something that is different from the feelings we are experiencing can also distract us by changing what is on our mind and so start to change our feelings - it's as though the feeling is DILUTED, less intense and more manageable.

For example, if I feel angry and decide to bake some biscuits or do the washing up (not the most enjoyable task...!), my mind would be focused on that thing and not just on what was making me angry. As my anger become less intense I stop thinking as much about the thing that made me angry and eventually I might feel a bit irritable (but the homemade biscuits would help ease this!).

Fill in the table below to work out what activities you could try as a way to reduce unpleasant feelings and bring on 'opposite' or preferred ones - make a note of these to remind yourself.

Unwanted Feeling	Opposite or Preferred Feeling (examples)	Activity to Bring Preferred Feeling
Sad	Content	
Hopeless	Hopeful	
Angry	Calm	
Scared	Confident	
Anxious (stressed)	Relaxed	
Frustrated	Satisfied	
Agitated or edgy	Chilled	
Ashamed	Proud	
Guilty	Accepting	
Inadequate	Capable	
Rejected	Included	
Unwanted	Wanted/loved	
Bored	Enthusiastic	
Uncertain	self-assured	

Examples of activities:

Cycling
 Yoga
 Shower or bath
 Swimming
 Walking
 Gardening
 Shopping
 DIY
 Dance
 Washing up
 Vacuum
 Tidy
 Cleaning
 Ironing
 Paint
 Sing
 Play on the swings and slide at a park

Learning to Self Soothe - being kind to ourselves

The Details....

When you perform any of the activities on this list your brain will be producing bio-chemicals, such as natural opioids and serotonin that gives you a sense of calm. There are three different factors that can make a particular activity more soothing:

- **Familiarity:** Activities that are associated with pleasant memories from the past will be particularly helpful in soothing your feelings. For example one woman said that sipping hot chocolate with a marshmallow on top from a large blue mug made her think of happy afternoons from her childhood.
- **Multi-Sensory:** Our emotional brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory and involve sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Typically pleasant activities that involve two or more senses are most soothing. An example of a multi-sensory activity might include walking in the woods, smelling the flowers, feeling the breeze, and hearing the wind rustling the trees.
- **Repetitive Motion:** Studies suggest that repetitive motion, such as chewing gum, knitting, or rocking in a chair, can produce soothing chemicals, like serotonin, in the brain. Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated.

Things You Can Do Immediately When You Are Feeling Emotionally Overwhelmed

- Take five cleansing breaths
- Self-massage
- Chew gum
- Sip a soothing warm drink (preferably not one with caffeine)
- Wear familiar perfume or cologne
- Suck on a hard sweet
- Spend 1 minute hitting a cushion
- Stretch
- Sit in the sun

Other things I can do:

Things You Can Do When You Are Anticipating Situations That Will Make You Upset

- Take a warm shower or bath
- Get a massage
- Wear most comfortable clothes
- Enjoy a favorite meal
- Burn scented candles
- Take a walk outdoors
- Arrange and smell flowers
- Listen to quiet music

Other things I can do:

Things You Can Do Every Day To Develop the Habit of Self-Soothing

- Take care of a pet
- Cook or bake (cakes, biscuits, bread)
- Meditate or relax in a quiet place
- Read a book
- Listen to "quiet" music
- Watch a funny movie or show
- Work on a hobby _____(write in your hobby e.g. pottery, knitting)
- Rock in a chair for 10 minutes
- Garden
- Write poetry
- Complete a journal

Other things I can do:

Remember

- ⇒ Making a start is a big step
- ⇒ You don't need to wait until you feel awful - try these things when you feel good too
- ⇒ Simple is good - everyday things can be as meaningful and helpful as any
- ⇒ Create a word or phrase to guide you into a good state to start - I like Brene Brown's, "decide that just turning up is good enough today" ...

MAKING A SELF SOOTHING BOX/BAG

The idea behind this box/bag is that it is filled with things that can help you to feel better. When you're feeling upset, anxious, or experiencing thoughts of suicide then you can use the box as a way to feel better.




One key thing to remember about this box/bag is that it is **personal to you**. This is important, as everyone responds differently to different things.

You can make your own box or decorate any sort of container or bag to use, and some people even make small pocket-sized versions to take out with them in case they need it.

The more personalised the better and creating the self-soothing box in itself can be a really good self-care activity. Below are some suggestions of what you could put in it:

Photographs - loved ones, pets, places you have felt calm	A USB filled with relaxing noises - whale song, nature sounds, the weather	A musical instrument - one you play or a drum, bell, or chimes
A favourite CD	An audiobook	A stress ball
Piece of material (silk, fluff, wool)	Hand cream with tactile beads to massage hands	Rubber bands to snap on your wrist
Clay or dough to massage	PVA glue to dry and peel off	Boiled sweets, chocolate, chewing gum, mints
Popping candy	A scented candle	Flavoured teabags or hot chocolate
Comforting perfume/aftershave	A jar of spices to smell	Aromatherapy oil e.g. lavender
Objects from nature e.g. pine cones, conkers, fossils,	Pebbles to hold	Gemstones
A sudoku book	Bubbles to blow	Soft socks to put on
Bubble bath for a soothing bath	A fluffy blanket or a weighted blanket	A soft cushion to hold
Adult colouring book and pens	Notebook and pen to write how you feel	A compassionate or funny letter to yourself to read
Coping statements	Hot water bottle	A Rosary or crucifix
A list of pleasant things to do (like baking or clay work)	A hair brush or scalp massager	Help line numbers
Bubble wrap to pop	Fidget toys	A rubix cube
Football cards from your favourite team	Magnets to play with	Memento from a favourite museum or art gallery
A word search book	An old birthday/christmas card from a treasured friend or relative	Your favourite movie on DVD or USB

APPS TO HELP WITH MOOD MANAGEMENT

Meditation Oasis	A variety of apps with guided meditations for sleep, relaxation, stress relief, energizing, and mindfulness.
Breathing Zone	A guided breathing app that helps users to slow down their breathing and create a feeling of calm. This uses recorded sounds, voices and visual cues.
Silvercloud 	A free app providing a wide range of supportive and interactive programmes, tools and tactics for help with wellbeing, life balance, time management, communication skills, goal setting, communication and relationship management, anger management, stress management, relaxation and sleep management, among many others.
Stay Alive 	A pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.
The Mental Health Foundation's Podcasts 	The 'Mental Health Foundation has 16 free podcasts' aimed to help you live a mentally happier life - from New Years' Resolutions to Relaxation for Better Sleep to Mindfulness and How to Overcome Fear and Anxiety. Can be listened to on the Mental Health Foundation website, downloaded or subscribe to on iTunes.
Mood Tools - Depression Aid	MoodTools is designed to help you combat depression and alleviate your negative moods, aiding you on your road to recovery. The app contains several different research-supported tools. They include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought Diary • Activity suggestions • Safety Plan - Develop a safety plan to keep you safe and utilize emergency resources during a suicidal crisis • Information and videos
Calm	Assists people with sleep and meditation using guided audio instructions to follow. There are recordings for general use, work, exercise and sleep. Many people find it helpful in getting better sleep, lowering stress, and reducing anxiety.

SENSORY TECHNIQUES

Grounding Techniques

Grounding skills can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety. They help someone to regain their mental focus from an often intensely emotional state. Here are a few to try and practice:

1. Using your senses
 - Begin by tracing your hand on a piece of paper and label each finger as one of the five senses. Then take each finger and identify something special and safe representing each of those five senses. For example: Thumb represents sight and a label for sight might be butterflies or my middle finger represents the smell sense and it could be represented by lilacs.
 - After writing and drawing all this on paper, put it in safe places in the home where it could be easily seen or take a copy with you (photographed on your phone) and memorize it.
 - Whenever you feel anxiety or panic, breathe deeply and slowly, and put your hand in front of your face where you can really see it - stare at your hand and then look at each finger and try to do the five senses exercise from memory.
2. Keep your eyes open, look around you, notice your surroundings, notice details (e.g. try to spot things that are your favourite colour).
3. Suck on a strong flavoured sweet (e.g. a mint) and focus on the flavour
4. Hold a scented pillow/handkerchief,
5. Squeeze a stress ball or use a fidget toy .
6. Place a cool cloth on your face, or hold something cool such as a can of soda or ice cubes.
7. Listen to soothing music
8. FOCUS on someone's voice or a neutral conversation
9. Re-orient yourself in place and time by asking yourself some or all of these questions:
 - Where am I?
 - What is today?
 - What is the date?
 - What is the month?
 - What is the year?
 - How old am I?
 - What season is it?

IF YOU START TO FEEL YOU CANNOT MANAGE YOUR MOOD ALONE

→Contact your GP

If you begin to feel hopeless and have thoughts of harming yourself get in touch with someone immediately e.g. a friend, relative, neighbor or call a helpline and the emergency services on 111

Useful Helplines:

Samaritans - Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

PAPYRUS - Young suicide prevention society.

Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm and 7pm to 10pm, and 2pm to 5pm on weekends)

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

SANE - Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers. **SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4.30pm to 10.30pm)**

Textcare: comfort and care via text message: www.sane.org.uk/textcare

Peer support forum: www.sane.org.uk/supportforum

Website: www.sane.org.uk/support

No Panic - Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD.

Offers a course to help overcome your phobia or OCD.

Phone: 0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am to 10pm)

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

Victim Support

Phone: 0808 168 9111 (24-hour helpline)

Website: www.victimsupport.org

CALM - CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Men's Health Forum - 24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email.

Website: www.menshealthforum.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness - Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: www.rethink.org

Alcoholics Anonymous

Phone: 0845 769 7555 (24-hour helpline)

Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk