

Community Living Well

Autumn 2019

In this edition

Coping
with Grief



Avoiding
burnout



Talking to
your GP
about your
mental health



Community
LivingWell

Contents

Special Features

Finding the Right Words: Talking to your GP about your mental health - **pg. 4**

How to support someone with a mental health problem - **pg. 6**

Clinical Services

Talking Therapies

Dealing with Grief - **pg. 8**

Talking Therapies

Grace's Experience with Grief - **pg. 10**

Talking Therapies

Bridging the Generational Gap - **pg. 12**

Primary Care Liaison Nurses

The Brave New World of Mental Health Technology - **pg. 14**

Wellbeing Services

Employment

Pressing Pause: A Lesson in Burnout - **pg. 16**

Peer Support

Positive Encounters: Self Help Support Group - **pg. 18**

Self-Care

The New Self-Care Services - **pg. 22**

Local Services Snapshot - **pg. 26**

Editor's Letter

Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of the Community Living Well magazine. This edition has special features and information on how to overcome the barriers that may prevent you from accessing mental health support.

Here at Community Living Well, we understand that when you're feeling low, it can be difficult to a) tell someone how you feel and b) admit to yourself how you feel. Obstacles may also come in the form of lacking someone to confide in or feeling like your problems are insignificant and will unfairly burden others.

We want you to remember that it is okay not to feel okay but also that it is okay to reach out to others and ask for help. When you're going through a tough time, it's hard to imagine an end in sight, but seeking help can be an instrumental steppingstone in your recovery journey. If you would like to learn more about how to take the first step in accessing support, please read the 'Talking to your GP about your mental health' article on **page. 4**.

From grief and burnout, to the brave new world of mental health technology, this edition is filled with advice and information that aims to help you on your quest for improved health and wellbeing. I hope that when you finish this edition, you're left feeling informed, uplifted and understood. If you're inspired by what you read and want to share your own story, remember you can contribute to the magazine by emailing me, Tamsin, at tamsin.cogan@kcmind.org.uk.

Tamsin Cogan - Editor

How to Refer

You can refer to the Community Living Well service quickly and securely by completing the form found on this page communitylivingwell.co.uk/self-referral-form-mental-health/. Alternatively, you can ask your GP to refer you.

After we have received your information, we will be in touch within 5 working days. If you have any questions about the referral process or other parts of Community Living Well, please contact us on **020 3317 4200**

Community Living Well

Eligibility

Community Living Well is a primary care service for anyone experiencing mental health difficulties who is 16 years old or over and signed up with a GP in Kensington and Chelsea, Queen's Park or Paddington.

Community Living Well offers a different kind of mental health support. It brings people together from your local community groups, NHS and the voluntary sector in one service which will work alongside you and your GP to help you access the support you need.

Our model of care aims to:

- work as one integrated service that wraps around the individual
- work with the GP at the centre as the accountable clinician responsible for each person's treatment and care

Our Partners

Central and North West London NHS

Foundation Trust – Primary Care Liaison and Talking Therapies Services

Brent, Wandsworth and Westminster Mind – Mother Tongue Counselling Service

Kensington and Chelsea Mind

– Peer Support Service

SMART – Navigator and Employment Services

Wellbeing Support

Employment – Advice and guidance on looking for work, staying in work, and improving employability skills.

Navigators – Advice and guidance on a range of issues including benefits, debt, housing and signposting to specialist support services.

Peer Support – Groups, social events and activities bringing people together to support and learn from each other.

Self-Care – Support and activities that help you to take care of your own mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Clinical Support

Talking Therapies – Talking therapy or counselling that can help you if you are feeling stressed, worried or low in mood.

Mother Tongue Counselling – Culturally appropriate one-to-one talking therapies, counselling and wellbeing workshops in Arabic and Farsi.

Primary Care Liaison – Specialist nurse-led support and access to Primary Care Psychiatry.

Find out more information and whether we can help you on our website

communitylivingwell.co.uk





Talking to your GP about your mental health



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or most of us, our local GP practice is the first place we should go when we are feeling unwell. Here at Community Living Well, we understand that it can be daunting to have a first conversation with your GP about your mental health. It can be particularly difficult to talk about your personal feelings to someone you hardly know – especially when you're not feeling well. However, always remember that you are not a burden and it is okay to ask for help. Your problem won't be considered insignificant or unimportant – everyone deserves help and your GP is there to support you. If you are experiencing anxiety, depression or a combination of both, it is possible that you may not have noticed the signs. Symptoms can build gradually over time, making it harder to spot when your mental health has deteriorated.

Why might I speak to my GP about my health?

If you're noticing changes in the way you are thinking or feeling over the past few weeks or months that concern you and cause you distress. You may find these thoughts or feelings too difficult to cope with as they impact on your day-to-day life.

If you're feeling nervous, anxious or on edge and unable to stop or control worrying.

If you are experiencing a lot of stress and find that it is having a knock-on effect on your health.

If you are feeling down, depressed, low in mood or hopeless.

If you're finding it hard to enjoy life and have little interest or pleasure in doing things you previously enjoyed.

Other common symptoms to look out for or mention

Irritability

Trouble falling, or staying asleep or sleeping too much

Feeling tired or having little energy

Poor appetite or overeating

Trouble concentrating on things

Trouble relaxing, unwinding or switching off from your worries

Feeling so restless that it is hard to sit still

Finding day-to-day life difficult e.g. household chores

What should I say to my GP?

Be honest and open and try not to worry about being judged.

Focus on how you feel but also mention how it is impacting other areas of your life.

Try to explain how you've been feeling over the past few months or weeks, and anything that has changed. A mood diary may help you to keep track of the fluctuations in your mood. Mental health is fluid and can change on a daily, weekly and monthly basis so it can be useful to map out regular changes to your mental landscape.

Use language that feels natural to you. Don't worry about trying to fit neatly into a common diagnosis. Mental health is unique to each individual and there is no one-size-fits-all model of support.



40% of GP appointments involve mental health

How can my GP help me?

Your GP may:

Refer you to a service. The Community Living Well service offers talking therapies, peer support groups, self-care services, help with employment or housing issues and specialist, structured advice from primary care liaison workers.

Make a diagnosis.

Write a prescription for an antidepressant or anxiety medication.

There is no right or wrong way to tell someone how you are feeling. Most people find that speaking to their GP and the help they receive as a result of the chat make a huge difference to their lives. Book an appointment today so you can talk through your options and get the support you deserve.

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year



How can I prepare?

Write down what you want to say in advance. This can help you structure your thoughts, as well as ensuring that you are able to get all your points across during the appointment.

Give yourself enough time to get to your appointment so that you don't feel rushed.

Think about taking someone with you to support you, like a close friend or family member. They can back you up or provide a reminder if you forget to mention any of your symptoms.

Highlight or print out any information you've found that helps you explain how you are feeling.

Ask for a longer (double) appointment so that you have time to get everything you want to say off your chest.



How to support someone with a mental health problem

It can be distressing and upsetting to see someone we care for or love experiencing a mental health problem. Despite your good intentions and desires to help, you may be left feeling powerless and ill-equipped to provide support. Remember that for this person, even having someone check in on them may make a vast difference. It will help them feel less alone, as they are reminded of the fact that people care about how they are feeling.

What symptoms might they have?

Anxiety and depression are not one-size-fits-all disorders. The symptoms can vary drastically from person to person. Some of the physical signs you can look out for are:

- Lack of energy or feeling tired all the time
- Restlessness and agitation
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much

Emotional signs may be harder to spot if the person isn't very forthcoming about communicating their emotional state and their distress is not visible.

Emotional Indicators to look out for

- Changes in behaviour and demeanour
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence
- Seeming sad and in low spirits
- Saying that they feel helpless or hopeless
- Withdrawal from social situations
- A lack of interest in activities that were previously pleasurable or enjoyable
- A decrease in concentration levels
- Being more irritable and impatient than usual
- Finding day-to-day life difficult e.g. household chores such as cleaning, cooking and washing clothes.
- Trouble relaxing and symptoms associated with restlessness

Tips for talking about mental health



Find a way to get time with them - Let them know you are there for a chat.

Create a compassionate space - Be kind, curious and patient; show your interest in helping.

Ask twice – Often we aren't prepared to give a full answer when someone asks us how we are. It is important to go beyond a passing comment and get to the bottom of how the person is feeling.

Reserve judgement – By fostering a warm and non-judgemental space, the person may feel more able to confide in you.

Ask open questions that invite them to explain more how they are doing - How are you feeling? Do you want to talk about it?

Active Listening – Repeat back what they said to ensure you have understood it and pay attention to your body language, eye contact and facial expression.

Display empathy - Validate how they are feeling by reassuring them that you understand or by sharing any similar experiences you may have. Try not to make the conversation about you though – always relate your experience to what they are going through.

Don't try to diagnose – Or second guess their feelings or jump to conclusions.

Let them go at their own pace – Don't fire too many questions at them and give them enough time to answer.

Respect privacy – Let them lead the discussion so that they can share as much or as little as they want to. Respect that the conversation may be nerve-wracking for them and don't add to the pressure they may be experiencing.

Offer them help in seeking professional support – By offering to go to their GP with them, helping them talk to a family member or fill out a referral form.

Know your limits – Signpost to a service such as Community Living Well if necessary. If you believe they or someone else may be in immediate danger, then call 999.



Dealing with Grief



Georgina

Georgina Burns is a counsellor and practitioner of Inter-Personal Therapy for Depression. Below she shares some insights into bereavement.

What is grief?

Grief is an emotional process we go through when we have lost something or someone that we are attached to. This may be a relationship, a job, or even a dream. One of the most devastating experiences of grief is the loss of a loved one who has died. This article contains information to help you understand more about bereavement.

There is no one way to grieve, no easily

identifiable or 'correct' pattern. A person can respond in many ways, including feeling shock, anger, despair, sadness, guilt and many other emotions.

What can I expect?

In the first few days, weeks or even months after a bereavement some people will feel numb or in disbelief about the loss. They may pick up the phone to call their loved one or find themselves waiting for them to walk through the door. It's quite common for the body and mind to take a while to catch up with the reality of a loss, but over time this disconnect should reduce.

Our feelings of loss might be displaced on to other events or situations, especially in the early stages. For instance we may find ourselves confused because we can't stop crying at a film, an injured bird or a news story. Take time to reflect on what it is that

you have reacted to and use it to tap into your own feelings of loss.

What does the grief process involve?

Grieving involves processing the emotions associated with your loss, which is painful. While it's important not to avoid your feelings, your overall self-care is also vital, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed by your emotions. Take the time you need to distract and look after yourself, whether this is through exercise, being with friends or watching a film.

The death of a loved one can shake the foundations of your life. You may find yourself redefining what it is to live in the world with meaning, or questioning your spiritual or religious beliefs. This is painful, but remember that some people make positive life changes on the back of grief, and a new beginning can emerge from a painful ending.

An example of this is found in the book *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed, who responded to her mother's death by hiking the Pacific Crest trail.

Remembering your loved one

Many people have a belief that when someone dies that they should be beyond criticism or put on a pedestal, but this isn't helpful. It's important to try and remember the relationship accurately so you can grieve for the real relationship that you've lost.

Rituals can be important in helping people grieve. It may be visiting a gravestone, listening to a song you both loved or continuing a tradition you shared, but these can all be ways to provide some continuity and will help you feel in control at a time of emotional chaos.


Special occasions


Anniversaries and festive events such as Christmas can be extra difficult periods for people who are bereaved. Look after yourself at these times; do things that you enjoy and draw on the support of others, some of whom may be feeling similar to you.


Complicated Grief

Some people experience what is termed complicated grief. This is when the grief process isn't happening and a person falls into a state of emotional paralysis or depression. In these situations therapy can be helpful to assist the person in unlocking their grief, and hopefully over time alleviating their depression.

Further reading

 You'll Get Over It: The Rage of Bereavement by Virginia Ironside

 All in the End is Harvest: An Anthology for Those Who Grieve by Edith Sitwell

 Through Grief: Bereavement Journey by Elizabeth Collick

If you are experiencing some of the issues mentioned...

If you feel that your grief is complicated by psychological issues, please refer yourself to the Talking Therapies service by filling out the form available here: communitylivingwell.co.uk/self-referral-form-mental-health/



Grace's Experience with Grief



"When you confide in someone else it feels like a confession, you start to realise the load you've been carrying on your back"

If you would like to be a part of our creative process through sharing your story, please get in touch with our editor, Tamsin Cogan, at tamsin.cogan@kcmind.org.uk

Grief often comes in ebbs and flows but it can be particularly painful around Christmas time. After experiencing grief for many years, Grace spoke to one of our counsellors from the Talking Therapies service, who encouraged her to reach out to and accept support from loved ones when coping with the impacts of a bereavement.



What difficulties led to you being referred to CLW Talking Therapies?

I had accessed the Community Living Well service before and received low intensity CBT treatment which helped me with my worries and negative thoughts. CBT had also increased my daily movements through introducing me to gardening. After the course ended, I was fine up until the run up to Christmas 2018. It was then that I started to not feel like myself. I was easily distracted, restless,

having sleepless nights. I was also experiencing negative thoughts about people, becoming fearful of them and feeling as if I was unable to trust them. I was experiencing a constant fear that people were going to hurt and upset me. This left me feeling hopeless and useless and I couldn't talk to people without crying. I went to my GP who asked me a few questions and then gave me some questionnaires; she was the first person to say to me "You have depression and anxiety and I will refer you for support."

What happened after you were referred?

I got the triage call where they assessed me over the phone. It was difficult to talk about myself but they were understanding and sympathetic to my situation. They felt counselling was more appropriate as my issues were more related to what has happened in my past and its impact on me now.

How did you find counselling?

After my first counselling session, I didn't want to come back again because I found it hard to talk to a stranger. However, I persevered and turned up the next week and consolidated what we discussed the week before.

I left the second session feeling uplifted and more confident at the prospect of receiving the help I had been looking for. By the third week I felt more relaxed and less tearful.

Did counselling help you feel better?

Without a shadow of a doubt. I started to feel much lighter, like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I realised how much I'd gone through after talking about things that I'd never told anyone. When you confide in someone else it feels like a confession, you start to realise the load you've been carrying on your back.

What has the effect been like on your self-esteem?

That I'm not a bad person. I've learnt that I've got good friends around me, people I can talk to. I also noticed that I was always putting myself down and feeling worthless. I never felt like I was doing enough for others, but by the end of the course I started to realise that I was doing enough, and that it's ok to accept support from others. I also started to identify a pattern – noticing that my depression tends to emerge in the run up to Christmas. In the past 2-3 years I can see that Christmas has been a trigger for a dip in my mood. It is when I miss my Dad the most and wish that he was still alive so that we could be in Ghana, going to church in our new clothes. I've learnt that talking really helps. When I'm missing my Dad, the first thing I will do now is pick up the phone and talk to someone, which I wasn't doing before.

Do you have a plan for maintaining your progress?

I live an active life; I've been walking and keeping in touch with friends regularly. If I feel sad, I no

"When I'm missing my dad, the first thing I will do now is pick up the phone and talk to someone, which I wasn't doing before."

"I left the second session feeling uplifted and more confident at the prospect of receiving the help I had been looking for."

longer wait for someone to come to my rescue by phoning me. Instead, I call them to say hello. I've lost friends in the past because I didn't feel like I could talk to anyone. I've now spoken to people about my depression and anxiety and even though they were surprised, it makes them more determined to reach out if they haven't heard from me.

What advice would you give others?

Please don't wait until you're feeling really low and tearful, go and ask for help. There's nothing to be ashamed of, all you need to say is, "I need help", and briefly describe your symptoms. Your GP will be able to work out how they can help you.

If you are experiencing some of the issues mentioned...

To refer yourself to the Talking Therapies service, please fill out the form available here: communitylivingwell.co.uk/self-referral-form-mental-health/ or call 020 3317 4200





Bridging the Generational Gap

For many, a generational gap can conjure up memories of painful family conflicts. Gulfs between generations may be experienced within any family, but the opposing cultural views and practices that can exist within an immigrant family can often create additional ground for conflict. Whilst immigrant families from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia may place emphasis on family obligations and social harmony, mainstream British culture in comparison tends to celebrate independence, self-sufficiency, and individuality.

As an immigrant adult living in the UK, you may wish to continue your native practices in your new country. This may feel at odds with your children who are learning new practices of their own or attempting to cast off the ways of life passed down to them. Balancing this tension with the preferences of your children and the expectations of your community can lead to generational rifts within the family.

As you grapple to juggle the old with the new, differences may multiply and

moments of mutual understanding may become rarer and rarer. This may leave you feeling frustrated, distressed and trigger symptoms commonly associated with anxiety or depression. You might find yourself worrying an excessive amount or imagining the worst-case scenario. This may disrupt your sleep pattern and make it difficult to relax at home.

There are several steps you can take to defuse the tension, build bridges and achieve conflict resolution.

12 | Call Community Living Well on **020 3317 4200**

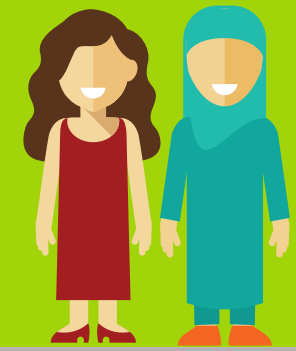
COMMUNICATE OPENLY

Make healthy and honest conversations a part of everyday life at home. Share details about your day with your children, so that they feel comfortable doing the same with you. Listening to your children's perspectives can help you gain a valuable insight into their lives which can strengthen your relationship with them.



PRACTICE ACCEPTANCE

Accept that your children may have interests, hobbies and attitudes that differ from yours. Treat a clash not as a power struggle, but as an opportunity to use discussion to improve communication and understanding. Try to be accepting of the different opinions and viewpoints your child may hold.



ENGAGE IN MUTUAL ACTIVITIES

Demonstrate an interest in your children's activities and their lifestyle choices rather than criticising them. Don't let your differences divide you – frame them as a positive instead and use them to develop a system of mutual learning. For instance, when you share your culturally significant traditions with your children, let them teach you about an interest that is close to their heart. You can also share companionship by doing mutually enjoyable activities together- even if it's a hobby as simple as watching a TV show.

DON'T HESITATE TO ASK FOR HELP

If you're finding it hard to reach a common understanding, have a chat with someone from outside the family who might be able to give you a fresh perspective on the situation. Seeking support from friends with similar experiences may help to buffer against the stress caused by the conflict. You can also make an appointment with a counsellor to talk things through. Little problems and anxieties can build up and make us feel low without realising, so it helps to have someone you can use as a sounding board for your thoughts. The counselling offered through Community Living Well is a talking therapy in which you can explore difficult, confusing or painful experiences with the help of a clinician. Through this process it is possible to gain insight and find new ways of relating to yourself and others. You can make a referral online at communitylivingwell.co.uk.



A Brave New World: How Tech Could Transform Mental Health Treatment

Technology and mental health may initially appear at odds. The fast-paced, 24/7 lifestyle that has stemmed from an increasingly interconnected

world has often been reported to add to our stress levels and hinder our happiness.

However, a pioneering wave of new research has started to capture how technological advancements may enhance mental health treatment in the UK. Whilst digital can never replace the relationship between a person and a therapist, it may have a real role to play through additional and blended help alongside traditional face-to-face therapy.

Whilst most of these technologies are not ready to be used yet and require more research, the following treatments are what could be on the horizon.

ClinTouch Mobile App

Great Manchester NHS Trust recently piloted a mobile app intended for people recovering from psychosis, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

ClinTouch asks users how they feel a few times a day, generating an alert if a relapse looks likely. As people typically only see a care co-ordinator once a month, the app has the potential to bridge some of the gaps in their care provision. The value of this additional support is significant, especially when symptoms of a relapse can appear within days.

Virtual Reality (VR)

Virtual Reality (VR) is an immersive experience that blocks out the physical world and transports the user into a digitally enhanced environment.

VR has been making waves as an effective treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress disorder for a while now. However, it is only in recent years that VR has been trialled as a potential vehicle to aid exposure therapy – when a person is exposed to anxiety-inducing stimuli in a safe and controlled environment.

A new project that took place recently involved a computer-generated avatar guiding a user through cognitive treatment programme for fear of heights. The project randomised 100 people with a significant fear of heights to either their VR application or no treatment. Participants had lived with their fear for, on average 30 years. After four or five 30 minute VR sessions, their fear had reduced on average by two-thirds.

VR has also provided a useful environment to teach patients experiencing emotional distress how to restore an equilibrium in their mood. It is hoped that the patient will then be able to transfer these coping mechanisms into the physical world.

Augmented Reality (AR)

Augmented reality (AR) blends the virtual and physical world through an overlay. This technology allows the user to access additional information through AR glasses. Initial research suggests that this perceptually enriched experience may

present an opportunity to provide real-time feedback to people in non-clinical environments as part of their therapy intervention. Personalised treatment will be achieved through the customization of the virtual world a patient will inhabit.

Modernising Monitoring

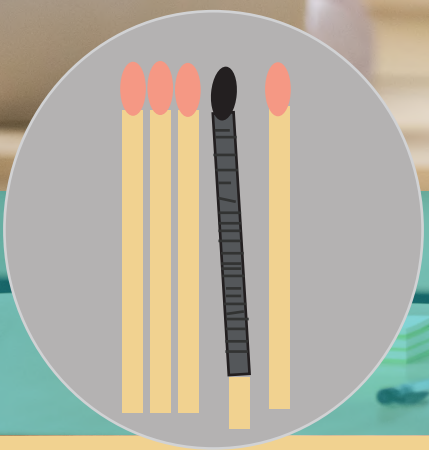
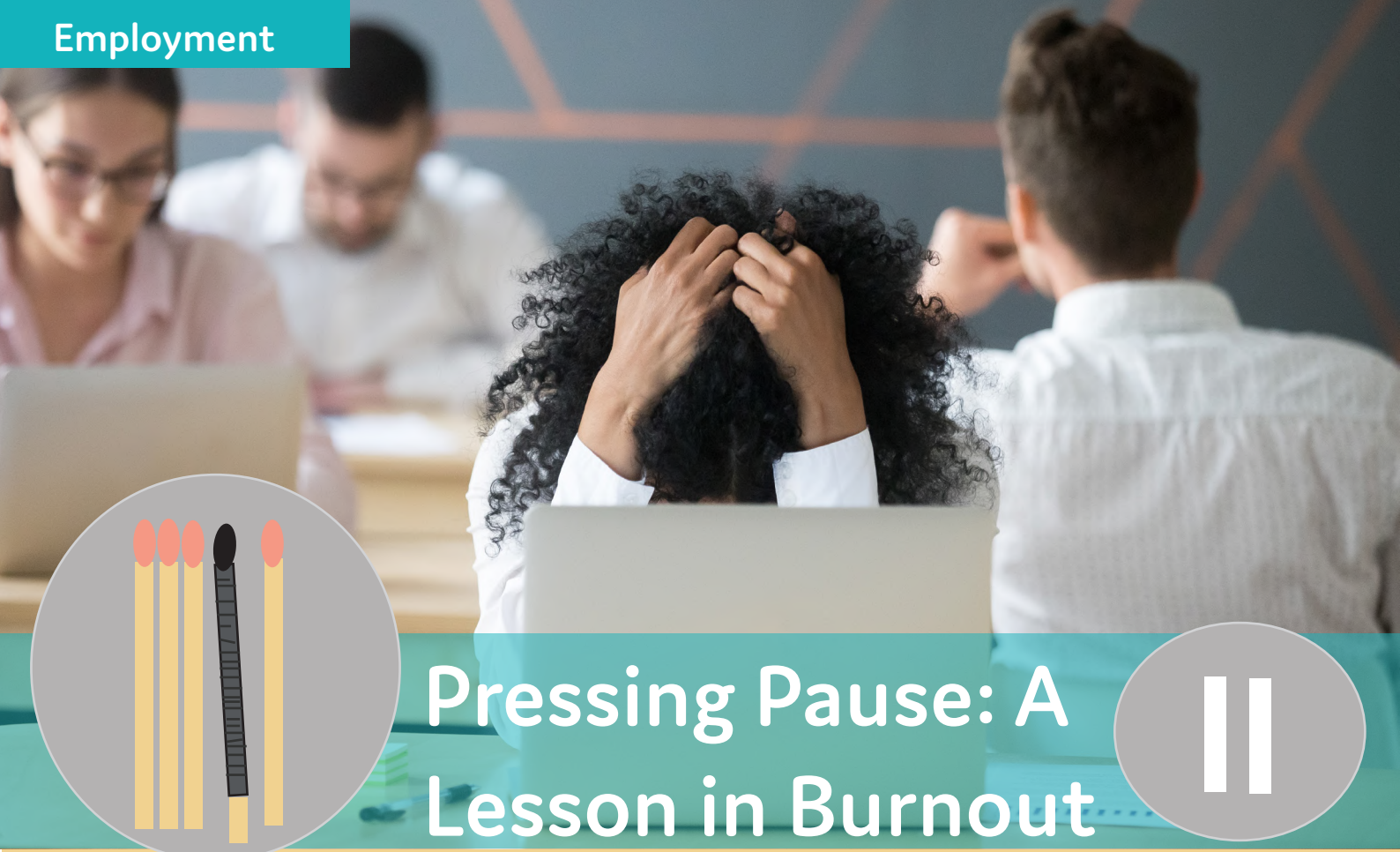
Many digital companies are in the process of exploring tech's ability to improve mental health diagnoses. New programmes may be able to analyse a person's voice, the language of written messages and the content of social media pages, as well as monitoring how fast a person swipes on a mobile device.

Mental health diagnosis frameworks have historically relied on paper questionnaires and people's memories, so it is hoped that this new form of technology could aid and improve the prediction and monitoring of mental health illnesses.

Who are the Primary Care Liaison Nurse Team?

The Primary Care Liaison Nurse Team can provide assessment and support to you and your GP for things such as specialist advice on treatment options, including medication advice and clinical support. They can also help you to manage your mental health and find solutions to life's challenges.

Referrals are made through your GP. If you feel the service could help you, book an appointment with your GP so that you can talk through your options with them.



Pressing Pause: A Lesson in Burnout



Everyone should be able to access and enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding career. When a healthy work to life balance is achieved, work can foster a range of health and wellbeing benefits. These can include personal enrichment, mental stimulation and a sense of purpose. However, when this balance is compromised, it can lead to growing levels of stress. Whilst stress can increase motivation and productivity, if left unmonitored, it can build up and result in exhaustion or burnout.

What is burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained; and unable to cope with the demands of life. Many employees push themselves to the limit and end up putting their health at risk in the process. Research shows that 51% of UK workers experience burnout. If left unaddressed, it can make it difficult for you to function and live well in your everyday life.

Signs and Symptoms

Burnout is a gradual and incremental process. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can spring up on you. The signs and symptoms are subtle at first, but progressively become worse as time goes on. Think of the early symptoms as red flags that are notifying you that something is wrong. Remember that the prevention is better than the cure. If you pay attention and actively reduce your stress, you can prevent it from developing into burnout.

| Behavioural Symptoms | Physical Symptoms | Emotional Symptoms |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alienation from work-related activities Reduced performance – concentration levels dip, procrastination increases, work and everyday tasks start to take longer and feel more labour-intensive Withdrawing from responsibilities or social situations Reduced ability to engage in pleasurable activities and relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Disrupted sleep patterns Change in diet or appetite Feeling frequently lethargic and tired Nausea Muscle Ache | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional exhaustion – irritability, low mood Feelings of ineffectiveness, inadequacy and lack of accomplishment Lowered self-esteem – increased sense of failure and self-doubt Loss of motivation that is caused from feeling undervalued |

It is important to emphasise that burnout is different to stress; stress in small doses is fine as it may provide some much-needed motivation to get things done. It is when we are continually exposed to stress and anxiety then it can turn into burnout

Be kind to yourself – Relax some of your rigid self-expectations. It may not be possible to have a busy social life, deliver on a big project and meet your personal fitness goals all at once. Prioritise, narrow your focus and don't demand too much of yourself.

Speak to your employer – If your workload feels unmanageable or there is a lack of clarity around what your role involves then speak to your employer to see if any adjustments can be made.

Set yourself a 'going home' deadline once or twice a week – by booking a gym class or a dinner with a friend. If you schedule downtime into your diary you will be more likely to find time for it.

Learn to say no and don't try to please everyone – Drawing boundaries is critical. Assuming new responsibilities without taking stock of the ones you already have can lead to further exhaustion.

Fight off imposter syndrome – Remind yourself why you deserve to be in your position and celebrate your professional and personal victories – no matter how big or small.

Take Time Out - Integrating relaxation and self-care techniques into your life will allow you to unwind and recharge your batteries after a stressful period. Our self-care services can link you up with self-care support in the community. For more information please see [pg. 22](#).

Seek Help – If your job is taking its toll on your mental health and you would like to know more about workplace adjustments and your employment rights, refer yourself to the Community Living Well Employment Service by making a referral online here: communitylivingwell.co.uk



Anxiety & Depression Support Groups

Our Peer Support programme includes structured self-help peer support groups that aim to bring people together who can share their experiences of anxiety, depression and other aspects of mental health difficulties that affect wellbeing.

Self-help groups provide our Peer Support members with the opportunity to help and support each other as equals, exchange ideas and tips, share their personal stories, teach, learn and grow together. It's your chance to talk without being judged, an opportunity to learn about how others in similar situations manage their symptoms, and to connect and feel encouraged by people who know what it's like to feel the way you do.

Peer Support members, Steven and Jenny, share their experience of the Anxiety and Depression support group and how it has benefitted their wellbeing.

How did the two of you meet?

Steven: I met Jenny at a Community Living Well Anxiety and Depression Peer Support group. I was suffering from depression and felt very isolated. I went to see my GP and was referred to the Community Living Well service. My support worker and I put together a plan of action to take advantage of the services on offer including primary care liaison support, peer support and one-to-one support.

I was in a very bad way at the start but when I met Jenny, I was starting to feel more able to express how I was feeling. I could recognise that Jenny was under a considerable amount of stress which I could relate to. We supported each other through the different issues we brought to the group.

Jenny: Before I joined the group, I had been desperately trying to find support.

I found one of the Peer Support brochures at the St Charles Centre and it immediately appealed to me as I had been looking for a talking group. When I met Steven, I immediately felt that we were on the same page – we had both suffered for so many years yet wanted to be survivors. There was a calmness about you, Steven, that I found very comforting. I am constantly in awe of the wisdom you share with the group, and you have said so many things that have really stuck in my mind.

What brought you to the Anxiety and Depression support group?

Steven: I had always felt like I was an observer. I was withdrawn, living in my own head and rarely engaged with others. I wanted to be in a group so that I could get the chance to say what I have always wanted to say. I felt the need to share my struggles with a variety of people so that I could get a range of perspectives on my situation.

Can you remember what it was like attending the first group?

Jenny: I was in a very bad place when I first attended the group. I remember the sensation of coming out afterwards and thinking that it was very helpful. There were many tears and it felt like the beginning of a journey. I have friends who are sympathetic, but it was

empathy that I had been searching for. I remember thinking that we may all have different struggles, but we all suffer the same pain and that is why we can support each other.

Why do you come back on a regular basis?

Jenny: I appreciate the depth that comes with attending a regular group. I like the fact that you can pick up from where you left off the week before. It's nice to have a core set of people present – I feel like I have made friends with the members.

Steven: On the one hand, I am pleased that as time has gone on, I have started to get to know people better. Previously, when relationships were forming with others, I had a habit of retreating in order to protect myself. The desire to talk was bursting through me but I felt blocked off from others.

On the other hand, I appreciate the opportunity to talk to an anonymous person. I like seeing new people at the group as they bring a new perspective and I gain reaffirmation from their experiences.

The group is a mixture of genders and ages, and it is important to have a collection of people who are from different backgrounds. We come together from different walks of life and in that moment, you talk about things you would never talk about with your

nearest and dearest. You display emotional honesty by talking about what is really going on beneath the surface, and then you disperse and go off and live your life with the knowledge you have learnt from the group.

Jenny: It is nice to know that the group is there whenever I need it – it isn't time limited. It can be anxiety inducing to know that support is coming to an end as you feel pressure to cover everything in a short space of time.

Steven: Yes, I agree that the fact that it has no end point is a fundamental benefit. It is reassuring to know that if something was to go wrong a few months down the line, I could access the group again.

How do you connect with other people in the group?

Jenny: I find it comforting to know that we've got each other's backs. Members that I have spoken to didn't feel like they had that before. I connect with them because they also feel things very deeply.

Steven: There are people there that you just click with; those who you can communicate with just through a look. Meeting kindred spirits opens up your world and makes life more fulfilling.

What have you learnt from the Anxiety and Depression group?

Steven: Being in a group and hearing something you have already learnt or previously thought has its own power – it cements your understanding and confirms the belief.

With the benefit of hindsight, what do you wish you knew earlier on in your journey that you know now?

Jenny: I wish I had known about this group sooner. The fact that it is continuously available makes all the difference.

Steven: Yes, knowing how much it can benefit you really makes you think why delay in signing up? Don't do it so late in the day so that you are left trying to catch up on what you have missed out on.

The Anxiety and Depression Peer Support groups take place every Monday in North Kensington, Tuesday in Chelsea and Thursday in Paddington. To find out more information please email peersupport@kcmind.org.uk.

If you are experiencing any of the issues mentioned...

To attend an Anxiety and Depression support group you will need to refer yourself to the Peer Support service. Please fill out the form available here: communitylivingwell.co.uk/self-referral-form-mental-health/ or call 020 3317 4200.





Recipe Sharing Group



Wellbeing Programme



Volunteering



Play Reading



Help in your Language



Massage Therapy

6 New Self-Care Services

There are lots of things you can do to take care of your mental, emotional and physical health. Self-Care is something that many of us overlook, often because we are unaware of all the tools and support available on our doorstep. There is a whole host of activities on offer that are designed to improve mood and reduce anxiety and depression. The Community Living Well website has details on the six local self-care services that will help you to feel better, stay well or manage existing health conditions: communitylivingwell.co.uk

Emotional Help in your Language

There are many challenges and hardships associated with moving to and living in a new country. You may miss your home and family or have moments of feeling isolated due to the absence of the support network of people who know you best.

The BME forum offers a service available in Arabic (Moroccan and Sudanese dialects), Bangla, Farsi, French, Somali and Spanish that provides the support needed to create a new life for yourself. Their support package includes emotional support and help with practical problems, including help to access other services.

Appointments take place in a safe and confidential space so that you can explore and express your thoughts, feeling and emotions with ease in your mother tongue.

Where? Church Street Neighbourhood Centre, Cherwell House, Penfold Street, NW8 8PT

More Information - nafsika.thalassis@bmehf.org.uk or 0795 8479 217

Wellbeing Programme

The Clement James Centre welcomes you to their wellbeing programme. Take part in a variety of one-off workshops, ongoing activities and events at their friendly centre.

A great chance for you to build confidence, relax and connect with others. Engaging with others at a local centre can create social bonds, strengthen community ties and link you up with free resources and materials.

Where? 95 Sirdar Road, Notting Hill, W11 4EQ

More Information - wellbeing@clementjames.org or 020 7221 8810

6 New Services



Well Read Play Reading

Reading can offer a delightful escape into our imaginations, inviting us into new worlds, scenarios, experiences and adventures. If your mental health condition makes concentrating on novels difficult, you may find that you are missing out on the many benefits and enjoyments associated with reading.

Shared reading can overcome some of the obstacles that prevent you from incorporating this pastime into your self-care routine, as you can opt to listen to others read stories, poems or plays aloud whilst participating as much or as little as you like.

Well Read is a community play-reading programme that is open to all. Join a warm, friendly and connected community that brings people together and plays to life. No experience is necessary.

Where? 8 Latimer Industrial Estate, Latimer Road, London W10 6RQ

More Information - wellread@theplaygroundtheatre.london

Volunteering on Prescription

Volunteering helps people feel better, supporting and enabling them to build their skills, knowledge and confidence so that they can take control of their lives and support others to do the same. It can help you on an individual level - providing a sense of purpose, satisfaction and giving additional meaning to your life, whilst also allowing you to become part of a community that unites people in pursuit of a shared goal or passion.

Join the Volunteering on Prescription project run by the Volunteer Centre Kensington and Chelsea. Volunteers are at the heart of this programme, selecting the activities and opportunities that they enjoy, sharing their interests and goals and building on their strengths to reach their goals – whether that's improved wellbeing, a bigger group of friends who enjoy each other's company and can lean on each other when life isn't easy, or the chance to use their skills to improve their lives and the lives of others. Volunteering on Prescription is for you, whoever you are and whatever you want to do.

Where? Across the borough
More Information - louisa.sch@vckc.org.uk or 020 8960 3722

My Recipe, My Story

As well as delicious food, cooking can also produce many positive mental health benefits. The creative process contains two rewarding self-care ingredients: the activity and the result.

If you are experiencing any negative thoughts or worries, it can be a healthy outlet to bring calm into your headspace and return your mind to the present moment.

The act of cooking also unwinds the body, as getting into the flow of the task at hand can ease the tension that appears when we feel anxious or depressed. At the end of the activity, you receive a reward for doing a task, and a demonstration that your actions have resulted in something real. Positive feedback and seeing others enjoy and appreciate your creation adds to this sense of accomplishment, boosting your sense of self-worth and value.

Open to women of diverse backgrounds, the My Recipe My Story activity group provides a space to explore the stories that are at the heart of your favourite recipes. If you are looking for additional social contact, preparing a homecooked meal and sharing your most treasured recipes can be a brilliant way to get to know others in the community.

More Information - info@clyd.co.uk or 0790 3865 156

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is being increasingly recognised as a tool and method to alleviate depression and anxiety. Tension caused by these conditions can build up causing muscle pains, cramps, headaches, joint pain, inflammation and interrupted sleep patterns. Massage therapy helps your body to relax and unwind, improves blood circulation, lowers blood pressure, boosts your immune system, releases endorphins that can help with depression and fosters an overall feeling of wellbeing.

In partnership with Community Massage London, SMART is offering centre-based therapies that will allow you to tap into the healing power of massage and restore your body-mind connection. Therapies on offer include Indian head massage, reflexology and seated massage.

Where? Every 2nd Tuesday of the month 1:15–5:15pm at ADKC, Whitstable House, Silchester Road W10 6SB
Every 4th Thursday of the month 1:00–5:00pm at SMART, The Basement, 15 Gertrude Street SW10 0JN

More Information - teresa@communitymassagelondon.co.uk or 0754 4108 406

Want to sign up to one of the Self-Care services?

To refer yourself to a Self-Care service, please fill out the form available here: communitylivingwell.co.uk/self-referral-form-mental-health/ or call 020 3317 4200.

Local Services Snapshot

There are lots of other services situated within both Kensington and Chelsea and Queen's Park and Paddington. We've included information and contact details for some of them below.

A photograph of a middle-aged man with glasses, smiling and holding a mug. He is in a workshop or shed filled with tools and equipment.

Sing to Live, Live to Sing

Did you know that singing can help to improve breathing, relieve stress and develop core muscles, as well as encouraging a feeling of belonging and improving overall mood?

Take part in the Sing to Live, Live to Sing group singing workshops to reap all these health benefits and more. No previous singing experience is necessary.

Who is it for? Kensington and Chelsea Residents
Website: rbkc.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/culture/sing-live-live-sing

Men's Shed

ACAVA have recently launched Maxilla Men's Shed at Maxilla Studios in North Kensington. The shed provides an enjoyable way to stay socially integrated in your local community, keep active and learn or pass on transferable skills in a woodworking and makerspace workshop environment. It features a series of specialised courses and training workshops which focus around learning a new skill, with shedders given the opportunity to hone and practice their new craft in the shed space.

Email: Rasha.el-sady@acava.org

Midaye

Midaye works to support individuals and families through befriending and empowering them, providing them with information, and by advocating on their behalf. Their Better Futures project provides one-to-one support and training and development opportunities for local women (Sewing classes, employment support, driving theory classes, IT support and volunteer training). The Education Outreach service is designed to provide intervention and support for families who are struggling to engage with their children's schools. The Family Support programme provides facilitated access to council and mainstream services in the borough.

Who is it for? Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster residents

Website: midaye.org.uk/
Email: Contact@midaye.org.uk
Phone: 020 8969 7456

A portrait of a young Black woman with long braids, wearing an orange top, looking directly at the camera.

The Dalgarno Trust

The Dalgarno Trust is a local charity which works with local communities to offer a wide range of activities, projects and services that promote health, wellbeing and inclusion for both the young and not so young. They work in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council to deliver core services and a youth programme. Services include creative and exercise classes, employment support, training courses, advice and information and social activities.

Who is it for? Kensington and Chelsea residents
Website: dalgarnotrust.org.uk/
Phone: 020 7034 0303
Email: reception@dalgarnotrust.org.uk



Community
LivingWell

Working together for your
wellbeing

Locations

CLW North Hub
St Charles Centre for Health
and Wellbeing, Exmoor
Street, W10 6DZ

CLW South Hubs
Violet Melchett Health
Centre, Community Living
Well, 2nd Floor, 30 Flood
Walk, Chelsea, SW3 5RR

Gertrude Street
15 Gertrude Street
London, SW10 0JN

Contact Details

communitylivingwell.co.uk
020 3317 4200 | cnw-tr.clw@nhs.net

Community Living Well is not a crisis service. If you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a friend or family member then please contact the Single Point of Access on **0800 0234 650** for help, advice or support over the phone, 24 hours a day.