



HOW TO HELP A WORRIED MIND

**Messages from young people to  
parents, carers & professionals**

## Dear Teacher and Parents/Carers

All I Ask.....is that you read this booklet!

It contains lots of helpful tips and advice to help you to understand how we feel and how you can support us... we know it's sometimes really challenging to know what we are thinking or what you can do, so we have included thoughts from our group through poems, letters, checklists etc. to help you to support us.....

Why you should read this booklet:

- To understand what a young person may be going through
- To know what you could do to help
- To make a change
- To support young people on their journey to positive mental health

Thousands of young people every day are stressed out by everyday life and certain circumstances, like exams, friendships, home life...and not getting the help required.

**You** can make a change. By reading this booklet, you will find strategies and approaches to help us feel more relaxed, happy and proactive. And perhaps most importantly help us to TALK OUT LOUD about our mental health.

Thank you for reading












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## All I Ask...

-  Talk to me if you think I need help
-  Understand that things can sometimes get too much
-  Give me some time when things get too much
-  Listen to me when I use my voice
-  Don't make me feel guilty
-  Help me to work out how I can address my problems
-  Remember... your subject is not the only one I am studying

# Expectations

A poem by Eugeyia Noel

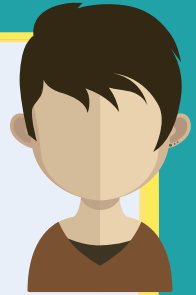
Expectation does not equate motivation  
It's a form of self-depravation  
It's an act of manifestation of having great anticipation  
To be, not to be is the same question  
Is it just me or is that the right mention?  
At the end of the day it's their opinion  
And what's important is your own perception  
The disappointment that comes after, when the expectation is not met, no laughter  
Maybe it's an indication of having faith in you  
But look at what they're putting you through  
To be or not to be is not the question  
What exactly is expectation?  
It's like aiming for something higher than your capabilities  
Pushing yourself to extreme to make these possibilities  
But is it your responsibility  
To please their insecurity  
It's good to be confident and optimistic  
But it's also good to be realistic  
But don't panic  
Don't take heed of the expectations you'll do fantastic  
It feels like we've got one shot and the world will cave in if we don't excel  
Well I'm here to tell you no matter what you do you will propel  
Look at the bigger picture, in a few years will it really matter?  
All you can do is try your best  
It doesn't matter what's the next test  
Don't stress  
And that's what I suggest



**PRESSURE**

## Peer pressure

We've all been there. All of us have at some point pretended to love or hate something just so we can impress our friends or the 'popular people'. Like it or not our friends and peers influence our day to day decisions, even if we don't realise it.



Sometimes it's hard to say no and make our own choices. We might need somebody to point out there is another way, help us see right from wrong, and support us in working out how we can say no.

## Have I changed?

Am I doing something out of character or behaving in a different way?

This could be due to peer pressure

I could be doing this to fit in.

Do you think I am drinking smoking or taking drugs?

Have I withdrawn from friendships or activities?

It can be a sign of being uncomfortable in a group

**It can be hard for us to start the conversation, so why don't you make the first move?**

# TALK TO ME

Give me the confidence to say no or walk away.

## Some strategies

### **Remove yourself:**

staying increases the chances of doing something I don't want to do. What can I do instead without making it look like a big deal to my peers?

### **Be adamant:**

help me to believe in myself when saying no.

### **You don't have to prove anything to anyone but yourself:**

I need reassurance that this is who I am, and no one will change me if I don't want them to.

### **Re-evaluate your friendships:**

Help me to ask myself - is someone is really my friend? But who can support me if I do decide to walk away?

### **Reconsider what they are asking:**

Encourage me to think it through. Help me to consider the consequences.

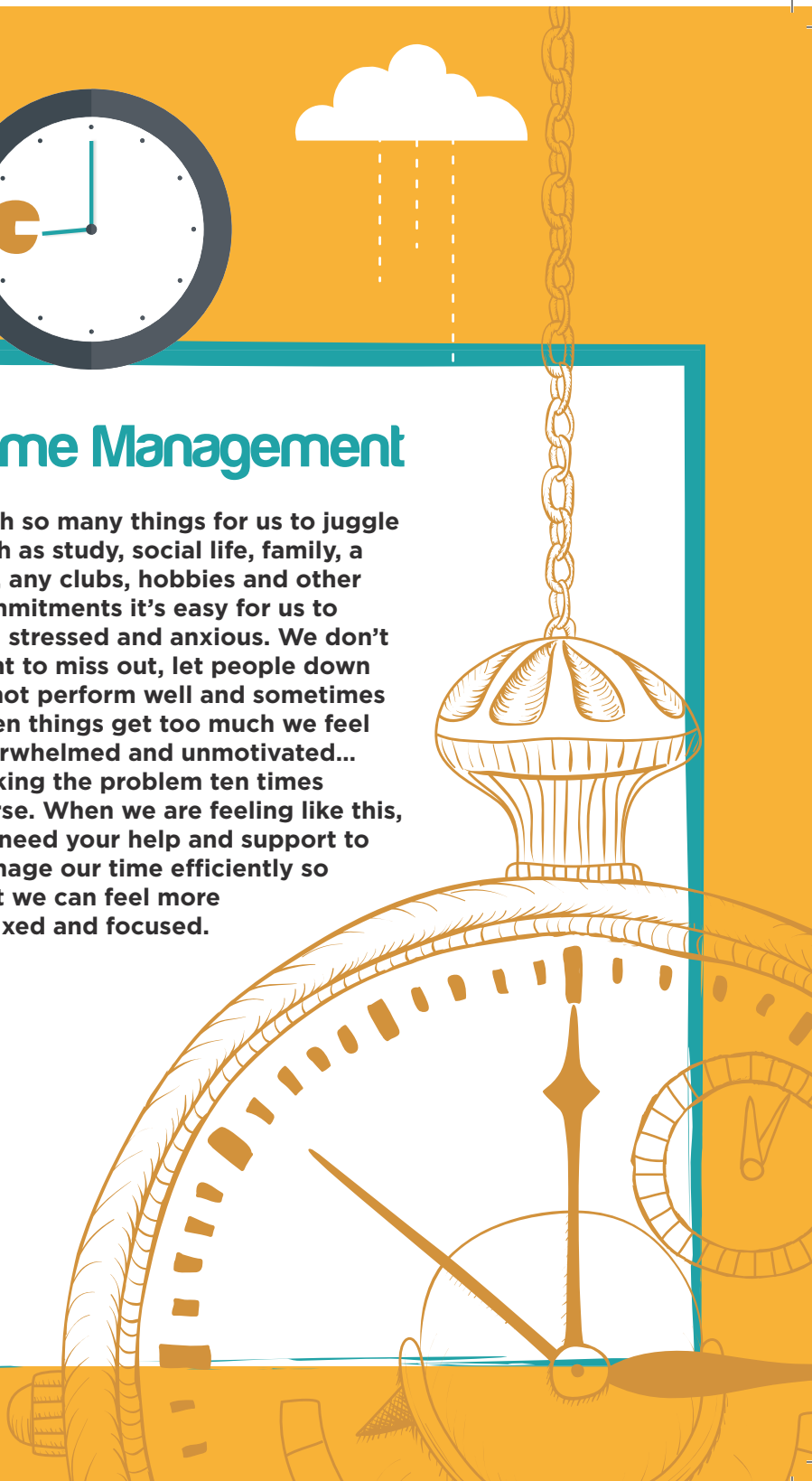
Understand that it is sometimes easier to go along with things and really hard for me to stand up to people or walk away...

Reassure me that you are always there for me



## Time Management

**With so many things for us to juggle such as study, social life, family, a job, any clubs, hobbies and other commitments it's easy for us to feel stressed and anxious. We don't want to miss out, let people down or not perform well and sometimes when things get too much we feel overwhelmed and unmotivated... making the problem ten times worse. When we are feeling like this, we need your help and support to manage our time efficiently so that we can feel more relaxed and focused.**





## Top tips



**Work out goals:** what are my priorities?



**Lists:** keep me focused on a few things.



**Prioritise:** If there are too many priorities it can be stressful and become overwhelming.



**Using my phone:** rather than take my phone away from me, think about how I can use it to help me. e.g. set reminders for any revision.



**Prepare the night before:** make sure I have everything ready for the next day.



**Write a schedule:** help me to design a schedule that meets my goals but also gives me some time to chill.



**Help me to understand the benefits of good time management:**

- reduced anxiety
- more time for family and friends
- better focus at school and home
- more opportunities to relax

**Regularly check-in with me to make sure I am managing my time and not getting overwhelmed by it all.**

# Study time: How we feel about it

“

I feel lazy because I don't want to study. I'd rather take a sip of coffee or take a two-hour long shower or sleep, or binge-watch a series on Netflix.

”

“

I feel overwhelmed, there is so much to do and every one of my teachers tells me that theirs is the most important subject. I simply don't know where to start.

”

“

My Mum's solution was to tell me I needed a break and take me off to the cinema. I spent the entire film stressing that I shouldn't be there. What I needed her to do was to help me plan out my study time to show me I had the time to be there.

”

# My study time - how can you help?

Parents / carers  
DO NOT DISTURB  
unless it's to bring  
me food or drink!

Music can  
help - without  
lyrics - classical  
maybe??

Healthy eating  
and drinking is  
important

Study till an  
appropriate time  
- SLEEP WILL  
HELP

A quiet location, where I can sit,  
revise, and organise myself. If this  
isn't available at home, help me to  
find somewhere else to go

Don't put me  
under pressure  
- help me, don't  
stress me!

Setting a  
timetable

Put away  
distractions, such  
as phones

Regular breaks  
- I shouldn't do  
too much at a time



# Stress

**Stress can manifest itself in many different ways, and can come from many different things such as issues at home, lots of school work, or even from friendship problems.**

## Strategies that can help me:



**Talk:** listen to my worries, no matter how trivial you think they may be. Sometimes just getting something off my chest can reduce the way I feel about a situation.



**Limit screen time:** studies have shown that if I spend longer my phone and other technology I will feel more stressed and anxious.



**Cut extras out:** if workload is my source of stress, I should only do the work that is important.



**Get enough sleep:** the recommended amount of sleep daily is 8-10 hours per day. If I don't get enough sleep I won't be able to manage difficult emotions such as stress.



**Set times for relaxation:** every day, I should set around half an hour for my personal time to just relax and do the things I love.



**Food:** regularly eating healthy food will mean I have more energy to elevate my mood during the day.



# Exam results

## This is Sarah.

She has just received her exam results, and unfortunately didn't do as well as she hoped.



**Every year there are millions of students in the same situation as Sarah, we need your help, support and reassurance that this isn't the end of the world. Help us to remember:**



**It is only natural to feel disappointed:** I should take some time to allow myself to feel this emotion, then try to forgive myself in order to move on.



**Social Media doesn't give the full picture:** many people will post exam results, and congratulate others on social media. It might look like everyone has done really well, but it is important to remember that not everyone will have - I'm not alone.



**I have options:** if my chosen career path or school is now not possible, help me to see that all is not lost. Things like re-takes, alternative courses can offer a different pathway.



**Focus on the positive:** help me to see that the situation can't be changed, so I must concentrate on the positive. I can learn from my mistakes, and plan for the future.



**Remember, this might lead to better things:** sometimes, an opportunity might arise that is better than the original opportunity.

**Help me to see that everyone has different ideas of what success is, so if I don't do as well as expected I'm not inferior, less intelligent or less ambitious than others. I'm simply going to take a different route in order to achieve my result.**

# Bereavement

**Grieving is a personal process that has no time limit, nor one 'right' way to do it.**

Losing someone that we are close to, whether it's a family member or a friend is a hard task for all of us. For a young person this may be the first time that they have lost someone, so we may not know how to feel or react.

During this period of grief, we need you to help us understand our emotions and the normality of these feelings but also appreciate my need for space.

**The key stages of grieving are:**



## Top tips



Help us to understand that it's ok to be angry, upset or depressed. Grieving is a natural part of recovering from a bereavement, and everyone's experience of grief is different. There are no rules about what we should feel, and for how long.



Attempt to remind us of happy memories, but at the same time help us to understand that we cannot help but miss somebody. Whilst you may be grieving too, it is important that we feel you are there for us.



Teachers or tutors remember that I may be distracted or finding it hard to concentrate for a while. Please take the time to ask me if I am ok, it may help you to understand what I'm going through and take a bit of pressure off me.



Remind me to look after myself - some of the following quite simple things can make a big difference, such as:

- **Eating** - I may lose my appetite, but I need to try to keep eating as normally as possible.
- **Sleeping** - it can be hard to sleep when you're very upset but help me to find some strategies for this.
- **Socialising** - encourage me to see my friends and keep up a normal social life it may also allow me to talk about how I'm doing.
- **Exercising** - regular exercise can make me feel good and help me sleep, it can also be a relief to focus on something physical.
- **Avoiding** smoking, drinking and taking drugs - help me to understand that they'll end up making me feel worse.

# Goal setting

**Setting goals is a great way to help me with direction, focus and motivation. Achieving goals can give me a massive confidence boost too!**

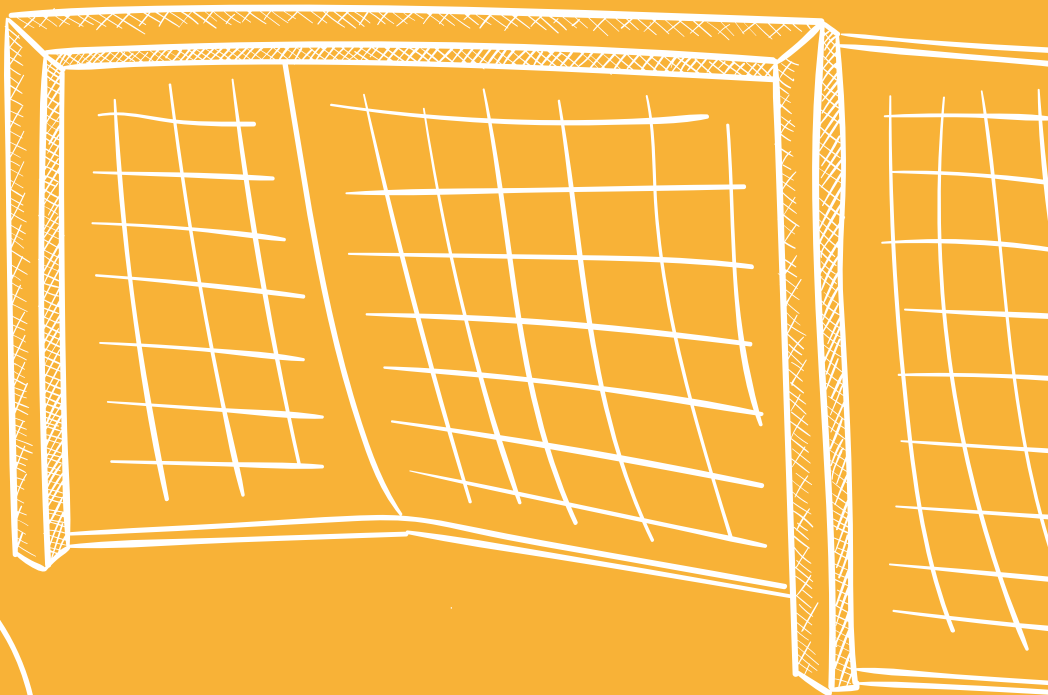
Goals need to be realistic and achievable. My goals need to be something personal to me and something I can aim for.

To set a goal I need to know what I want in the first place. Failing to identify what I'm hoping to achieve can be a huge stumbling block.

*Your support with  
setting my goals  
would be great!*







**Start with the things I enjoy:** we are happiest when we're using our strengths. Get me to write down the five things I enjoy most in life. Can I identify any goals associated with using these strengths?



**Don't get too caught up in 'big' things:** a lot of the time when we think about goals, we think they need to be really big – and this can be overwhelming. Help me to change how I think about goals. A goal can be anything I want to do or achieve – big, small or completely random!



**Think about what I don't want:** support me in writing a list of five or ten things that I don't want. Then turn them around to become positive goals. For example, turn the negative goal 'I don't want to be stuck at home' into a positive one: 'I want to travel.'



**Help me to recognise success:** it's important to congratulate me and help me feel good when I have achieved one of my goals.

An online survey was completed by over 1,000 young people, aged between 11 & 18, living in Northamptonshire.

We asked the questions:

“What support would you like to have at **school** if your mental health is not good?”

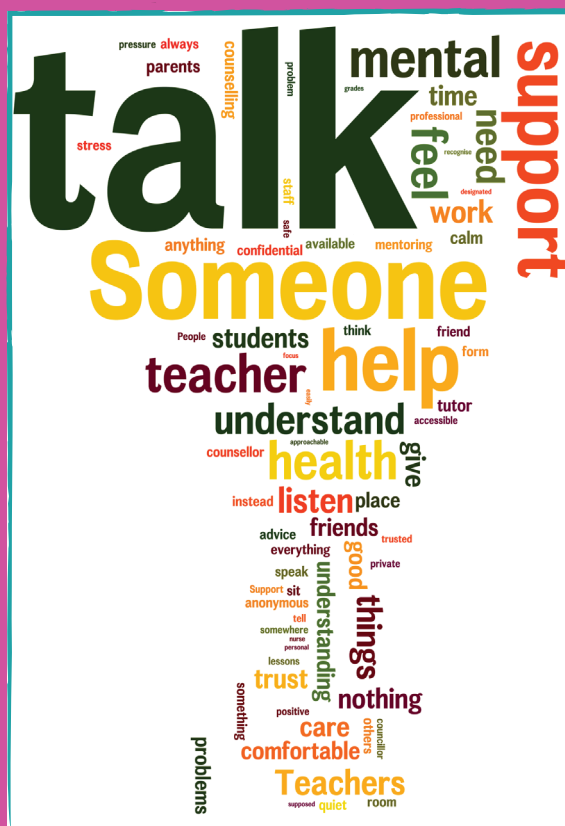
“

Somebody I trust should know if I am struggling so I have somebody by my side.

People who are there to guide and support me without undermining the things I am going through or how I am feeling.

Teachers to recognise and acknowledge pressure and stress and try and help me with it.

A space where I can think about everything, organise myself and come back with a more positive mindset.



An emphasis on the importance of mental health being greater than any exams or grades, the recognition of mental health being as great an issue as physical health.

”

“What support would you like to have at **home** if your mental health is not good?”

“

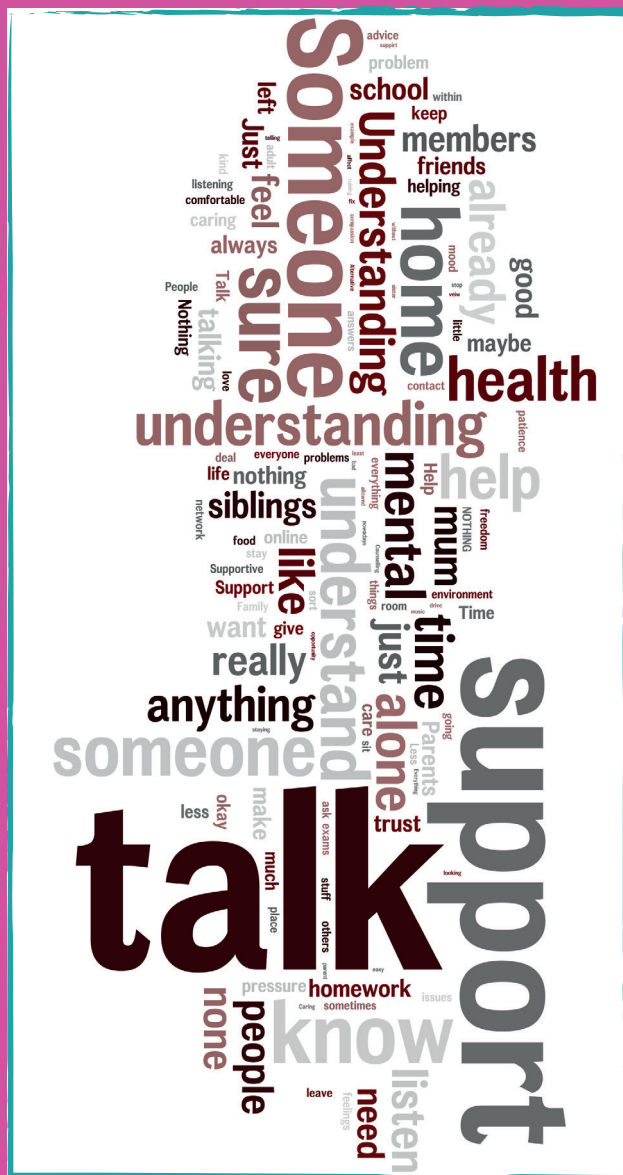
Understand the importance of mental health and how specific feelings can affect decisions and daily life. I need someone there to support me.

Always talk and be open with one another.

I need understanding parents who are always proud of me.

For people around me to accept that it's ok not to be ok and that everyone needs a little help sometimes

”





## **Dear Teachers, Parents, and Carers**

As teenagers, we're all susceptible and notorious for reducing our communication with parental and supporting figures. We grow independent and too proud to ask for help, but when we do, it's not always verbal.

### **Cries for help aren't always loud**






Attitude and behaviour are the major tells. If a typically well-behaved young person starts acting abnormal and ill-mannered, it may be due to the people they're interacting with. However, most of the time the cause of the out-of-sorts behaviour is because they need attention: help. Teachers, parents, and carers, like yourselves tend to focus on the more misbehaved and clearly struggling children. You assume that the quiet ones are fine and understand everything. You'll occasionally query the shy ones, ask if they're okay and more likely than not they'll say yes. More likely they mean no.

### **Why don't I ask for help?**

You often wonder why we don't ask for help. It's a common belief among young people that asking for help is a sign of weakness, that you'll laugh at them for not knowing. If a child is labelled as 'smart' and gets a question wrong in front of their peers, it can feel like the end of the world. There is still a stigma attached to mental health and many of us don't ask for help for fear of being judged.



### But what if I do?

-  **Listen carefully to what I say:** ask me how I feel. Be calm, and tell me it's ok to bring up the subject.
-  **Try to be accepting and open-minded:** whatever I tell you, I need to know you are there for me – it's a big deal that I talked to you.
-  **Offer to help me find a solution:** avoid trying to take control though – I want to work it out for myself.
-  **Don't take it personally:** if my issue, problem or concern is about you understand that it took courage for me to talk to you so please try to react in a positive way. It might be that I can't talk to you about how I feel so please encourage me to talk to someone I feel comfortable with.
-  **Don't give me ultimatums:** they don't work, and may make my negative feelings or behaviour worse.



# TALK OUT LOUD

**Each year, each month, each week and every day a new person has what they may not know is a mental health need. It is rarely noticeable; often invisible. This doesn't mean everybody is completely oblivious to what a mental health need looks like, but sometimes people suffer in silence. They don't look different in any way, in fact they look like everyone else; mental health need or not.**

**Nobody's perfect:** we use perfect quite often in our everyday lives; the 'Perfect student'; the 'Perfect child'. We use the word, 'perfect' to describe how amazing and great something is – it's the best. It's a word we don't always use correctly. Can we really use a word to describe something as the best when we don't actually know what the best is or what is better than this; this thing, this item or this person, this 'Perfect child'? The word 'perfect' has so much meaning, yet such simplicity. We have the tendency to block out the simple things, the small things. We often ignore, the small print that can potentially affect everything around us.

**Think about what you say:** my research suggests that the average person speaks 13,500 words (in a day), that's about 562 words an hour. Words are our strongest weapon, most upgraded line of defence and although words can bring beauty and peace they can also bring great upset. That's why it's so important to watch what we say, we don't know what anyone is going through and we don't know how severe some things can be for people in life, terrible things can happen to any of us.

**Look underneath:** no matter if a young person is happy, no matter if that young person comes across as ok, deep down things can be very, very different, in some cases almost dark. These dark things can manifest into terrible thoughts that sadly can lead to severe outcomes.

A simple thing that a teacher says like, “You’re the perfect student” can lead to someone listening feeling incredibly sad. Why aren’t they good enough? Why can’t they be perfect? What makes that child so special to everyone else? They can manifest in someone’s mind, sometimes making them feel invaluable and worthless.

As well as thinking about what we say, we also need to listen out for each other. We have to make sure we are all okay, we have to stand up for each other.

Many young people suffer in silence. They look ordinary, they are the same as you and me, and we only recognise that they are not ok if we pay close attention. We don’t invade, we don’t interrogate who we think has a mental health need, but we can make them aware that we are here. There is no one check list to spot those with mental health needs, we cannot spot ‘anything’ but we can use our words, our 562 an hour to make them aware that we are here. It doesn’t take much to send a message, open our mouths, talk and neither does it take much to say a simple thing, that for somebody listening can have consequences.

No one is perfect, no one is the best, not everyone is fine, no one can truly rest.

It’s only when it’s apparent, only when it’s clear, that the solution is obvious, to all it will appear.



HOW TO HELP A WORRIED MIND

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