

Mental Health

Factsheet



Covid Edition - July 2020

We have been through some very trying times over the past six months, and it is a known fact that many are suffering mental anguish caused by a variety of reasons, such as social distancing, financial worries, concerns regarding employment and possible redundancy and not least not being able to socialise for an extended period of time. There are other factors, not necessarily Coronavirus related, which may also affect somebody's wellbeing.

During the lockdown I hope that we have all realised that each and every one of us is an Almoner, and we should all be looking out for each other and our families. There has been a renewed and welcome desire from many to take care of our extended Masonic family and doing a good deed for another is a sure way to feel positive about ourselves and is a boost to our own mental wellbeing.

To help us all take care of each other, I have put together a summary of items from a variety of sources which I hope will be of assistance should you meet a friend or Brother in distressed circumstances.

I hope that you find the information in this factsheet useful, and if you should need any further help from me or my team please contact me provgalm@westkentmasons.org.uk 07739 249398

Yours fraternally,

N. A. Moakes

Neil. A. Moakes
Provincial Grand Almoner
Province of West Kent

What is mental health?

Mental health is a crucial aspect of our life just as physical health is. It can be described as the positive sense of wellbeing, and the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment, and sadness. Research shows one in four of us will experience some kind of mental health issue, so it is helpful to have a basic understanding of the issues, symptoms, impacts and sources of support available.

Mental health issues

There are several diagnosable mental health conditions with people experiencing different symptoms that can vary in severity, intensity, and form.

The most commonly diagnosed are:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders (including panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorders, phobias and post-traumatic stress disorders)
- Eating disorders
- Bipolar disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Self-harm

Recovery is possible with the right help and support, with many people able to lead independent and fulfilling lives. However, some individuals may relapse and will need support.

Influences of wellbeing

The following things can all affect somebody's wellbeing:

- Work pressures (or unemployment)
- Stress
- Relationship pressures (including bereavement and loss)
- Abuse (physical or psychological)
- Financial worries (including debt)
- Homelessness / housing pressures
- Addiction (drugs and alcohol dependency)
- Physical illness or injury
- Loneliness and social isolation

Identifying early signs

When you are speaking to Brethren or their family, the key thing to look and listen out for is a change in the person's typical behaviour. This can take many forms, so for example, they may have gone from being quite extrovert to becoming much more introvert. Other signs to look out for include tearfulness, headaches, loss of humour or appetite, or sudden changes in emotions or mood. Also, if a Brother who has normally been good at ritual appears distracted or disengaged when you are speaking to him, he might be struggling in his personal life.

Supporting someone

If problems are identified at an early stage, then more effective help and appropriate support can be possible. Sometimes just having someone who will listen is a comfort but always ensure that you actively listen to manage a person's expectations around the support they might need.

If someone you are speaking to becomes emotional, upset or you pick up on any signs then you should gently encourage the person to speak to their GP or seek further support from an appropriate organisation.

Things you should and should not say

Whatever you say to somebody you should always try to be positive and encourage the person to help themselves. Don't be judgmental or make assumptions about anybody. It could be beneficial for them to involve a family member or friend in conversations should they wish to do so.

Questions you could ask to begin with include:

- How are you feeling at the moment?
- How long have you felt like this – is it an ongoing issue?
- Who do you feel you can go to for support?
- Is there anything we can do to help?

Above all, it is important to provide reassurance to anyone you are supporting and to encourage them to do the things which make them happiest. For example, if supporting a Brother this could mean encouraging him to revisit his love of Freemasonry or returning to an old hobby or explore taking up new pastimes or hobbies.

What to do if someone becomes emotional or upset

Here are some points to help you should somebody you are speaking to become emotional or upset:

- Try to be calm
- Reassure them that it is okay to be upset
- Ask if there is anyone they would like you to contact for them
- Be sensitive and sympathetic
- Be respectful
- Confirm that the discussion can continue at a pace that suits them

In these circumstances remember you must not take on responsibility for solving a person's mental health and always remember to look after yourself.

Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid teaches people how to identify, understand and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue through listening, reassuring and responding, even in a crisis – and even potentially prevent a crisis from happening.

For more information visit MHFA England -

www.mhfaengland.org/individuals/adult

Getting help

Please remember that its extremely important to act on any suspicions that you have over a person's mental wellbeing, the sooner a person receives help form an appropriate source, such as their GP, then the sooner they will be on the road to recovery. Mental illness is no different to any other illness, if a person is in physical pain, they seek help, and mental pain should be no different.

Help in West Kent

Your Lodge Almoner is a good place to start – He has a wealth of tools at his disposal to help, and it's the correct course of action to always involve him when you identify a Brother, or his family, who are in need of support. Your Almoner also has access to the Provincial Grand Almoner's team should he need any help, so he will know exactly what to do if you approach him, but ensure first that the person who needs help is happy for the Lodge Almoner to be involved.

Provincial Grand Almoner & Group Almoners:

Provincial Grand Almoner – Neil Moakes

ProvGAlm@westkentmasons.org.uk 07739 249 398

Group 1 – Julian Rowley (Dartford, Wilmington & Greenhithe)

jrowleyuk@yahoo.co.uk 07771 598 967

Group 2 – Kevin Killick (Welling & Wrotham)

lodgehouselodge@aol.com 07903 682 348

Group 3 – Mike Bowyer Jones (Sidcup, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells & Edenbridge) mike@winterfieldffarm.co.uk 07881 825 600

Group 4 – Graham Tarran (Bromley)

g.tarran@ntlworld.com 07790 492 665

Every Mind Matters

Having good mental health helps us relax more, achieve more and enjoy our lives more. The NHS Every Mind Matters website has expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

MIND

Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. www.mind.org.uk or call 020 8519 2122

Rethink Mental Illness

Helps millions of people affected by mental illness by challenging attitudes, changing lives. www.rethink.org or call 0300 5000 927

Mental Health Foundation

Helps people to thrive through understanding, protecting and sustaining their mental health. www.mentalhealth.org.uk or call 020 7803 1100

Combat Stress

Provides UK wide support to veterans from every service and every conflict. www.combatstress.org.uk or call 0800 1381619

ASSIST trauma care

Information and specialist help for people with PTSD and anyone supporting them – www.assisttraumacare.org.uk

Voluntary Action Service

For anyone who is vulnerable and needing somebody to talk to, NHS Volunteer Responders delivered through the Royal Voluntary Service, has been set up to support the NHS and the care sector during the Covid-19 outbreak. Visit

www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk or call 0808 196 3646.

Young Minds

Leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges, making sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties.

Visit www.youngminds.org.uk or call 0808 802 5544 if you are a parent needing help.

Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF runs the Counselling Careline which has specialist counsellors for anyone struggling to cope. Freemasons, their wives, partners or widows, as well as children between the ages of 17 - 25 who are in full-time education can access the Counselling Careline. Counselling sessions can be provided if preferred via a secure video link rather than on the telephone. This is a free service and requires no form filling or application. Contact should be made with the MCF on 0800 035 60 90 (calls are free) or email help@mcf.org.uk

The MCF's Advice and Support Team

Offer advice, guidance, and support on a range of issues. Contact them by calling 0800 035 60 90.

The information contained in this factsheet is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute advice. Neither the Province of West Kent nor the Provincial Grand Almoner endorse any of the organisations listed.