



MYTH-BUSTING INFORMATION

Mental health and getting help

LIKEMIND

A mental health companion
for young people



Myth-busting information about mental health and getting help

Young people have mental illnesses too	2
Recognising a problem	4
How do I know what's a spiritual experience and what's an experience related to my mental health?	6
Telling the difference between drugs and mental illness	8
Dealing with personal barriers to seeking help	12
How to get help!	16

Why bother reading this?

Are you someone who is struggling to cope, finding things difficult or worried about your mental health? Have you ever wanted some advice and answers? If so then this booklet and the website likemind.nhs.uk might be useful.

This booklet has been produced with and for young people aged 14–35.

See also our booklets on advice 'For friends and family of people with psychosis' and 'Early intervention in psychosis services'. You can download these from our website likemind.nhs.uk



“ Get on-line, get educated and then if you think you need it... get help. ”

Kai, 29

MYTHBUSTER 1

“ Young people don't have mental health problems! ”

False! Young people have mental health problems too.

Did you know that one in ten young people will have some sort of early mental health problem and as many as two to three people in 100 will develop psychosis? This is normal!

There's nothing weird about mental illness. By mental illness we mean things like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, anorexia, obsessive compulsive disorder and lots of others. As you'll find out just over the page (if you keep reading of course and aren't about to bin this!) a label isn't really that important. What matters is getting advice and finding ways to get on with life and overcome difficulties.

Research evidence suggests that the earlier you get support for mental health problems, the easier it is to accept and overcome difficulties. The more involved you are in deciding what's best for you, the better the outcome.

You may have come across people with mental health problems in films, TV and books. Sometimes this is accurate and sometimes it isn't. Everybody is different so whatever you've seen or heard, it doesn't mean it will be the same for you.

“ When I've thought of mental health and that, you think only adults go through that. ”

Adam, 22

“ I think knowing that other young people have it as well, really helps, because a lot of people think 'oh I'm really unusual' and kind of shy away from it. But I think when you do realise how many other people can have the same problem it helps. ”

Sabah, 19



You can share your experiences and hear other people's stories on the 'Your stories' page and forum at likemind.nhs.uk

Recognising a mental health problem: it's not 'am I normal?', but 'am I bothered?'

One thing that's really difficult is deciding whether you have a problem or not.

How can you tell the difference, for example, between normal experiences and paranoia and a serious mental health issue? Is it normal or abnormal?

It's hard to be absolutely sure, so you wait until you can't cope anymore. In one way, it's really difficult, in another way, it's really easy: If there's something going on for you that's different from how things used to be, it's been going on for more than a week or two, it's upsetting or frightening or it's affecting your life, then it's a problem worth talking about.

However silly or difficult that may seem, you don't need to spend time examining it close up and in detail. Instead try talking to someone you trust, and then getting some professional advice. If you find it hard to trust people then getting professional advice might seem scary.

This booklet is here to give you some advice on how to find someone you can talk to.



How do I know what's a spiritual experience and what's an experience related to my mental health?

Sometimes people who have a religion, faith or spirituality may have religious or spiritual experiences. These experiences can be different for everyone. They can involve seeing or hearing something related to your religious belief, that others can't see or hear.

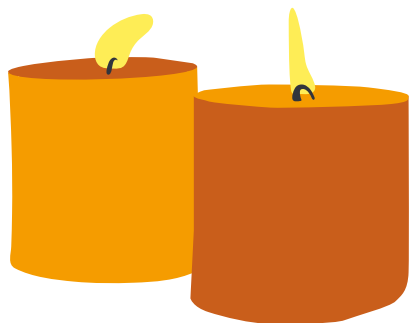
At face value, a religious experience sounds very similar in nature to some experiences of mental health problems (e.g. psychosis), so how are you supposed to make sense of these experiences, and know whether they are spiritual or mental health related?

Research suggests that people who have religious experiences are aware that:

- What has happened is a spiritual experience – i.e. it feels spiritual, and not like an everyday occurrence
- The spiritual experience usually makes sense in the context of your religious beliefs

Research also suggests that:

- Spiritual experiences are usually pleasant
- Spiritual experiences do not impact your ability to study, work or have good relationships with friends and family
- They do not impact on your ability to think clearly
- They do not suggest that you should harm yourself or others



If you are finding some of your experiences distressing or they are getting in the way of day-to-day life, talk to someone that you trust, and then get some professional advice. You don't need to feel scared, professionals will know how to help you with any distress you're experiencing.

They can discuss your experiences and your faith and spiritual beliefs. They may, with your permission, take advice from a spiritual leader or family member. They can help you to make sense of what's been happening, so that you can move on in life.

“ It's hard to decipher what's real and what's not when it comes to spirituality... I still now, looking back, think 'was it the psychosis?' or was it genuinely 'cos I'm a Christian? I do feel like in your darkest times God's there with you, and for me, there were people trying to say 'but it's not real' or trying to explain that it wouldn't be real. They weren't saying directly it's not real but that it wouldn't be real. But to me it's what got me through as well, if that makes sense, so it's – I don't know – a bit of a taboo subject I think. Can you actually say that it wasn't real or not? I dunno. ”

Faddey, 35

Telling the difference between drugs and mental illness: a question of time

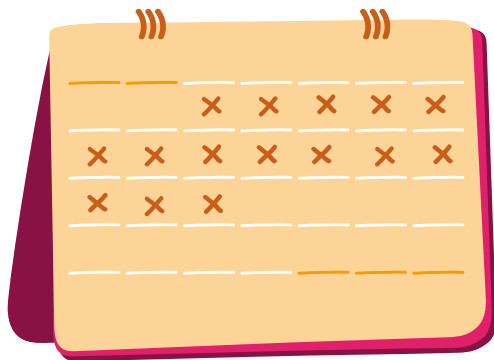
So what's an effect from drugs and what's a mental health problem?

Again in one way it's not always easy to tell. Some drugs like cannabis, cocaine and MDMA (and others) can make you feel great or really relaxed which is why you might take them!

But depending on the strength or what else they're mixed with, they can also make you feel paranoid and worried, they can give you panic attacks and some people get weird perceptions like feeling, seeing, tasting or smelling strange things.

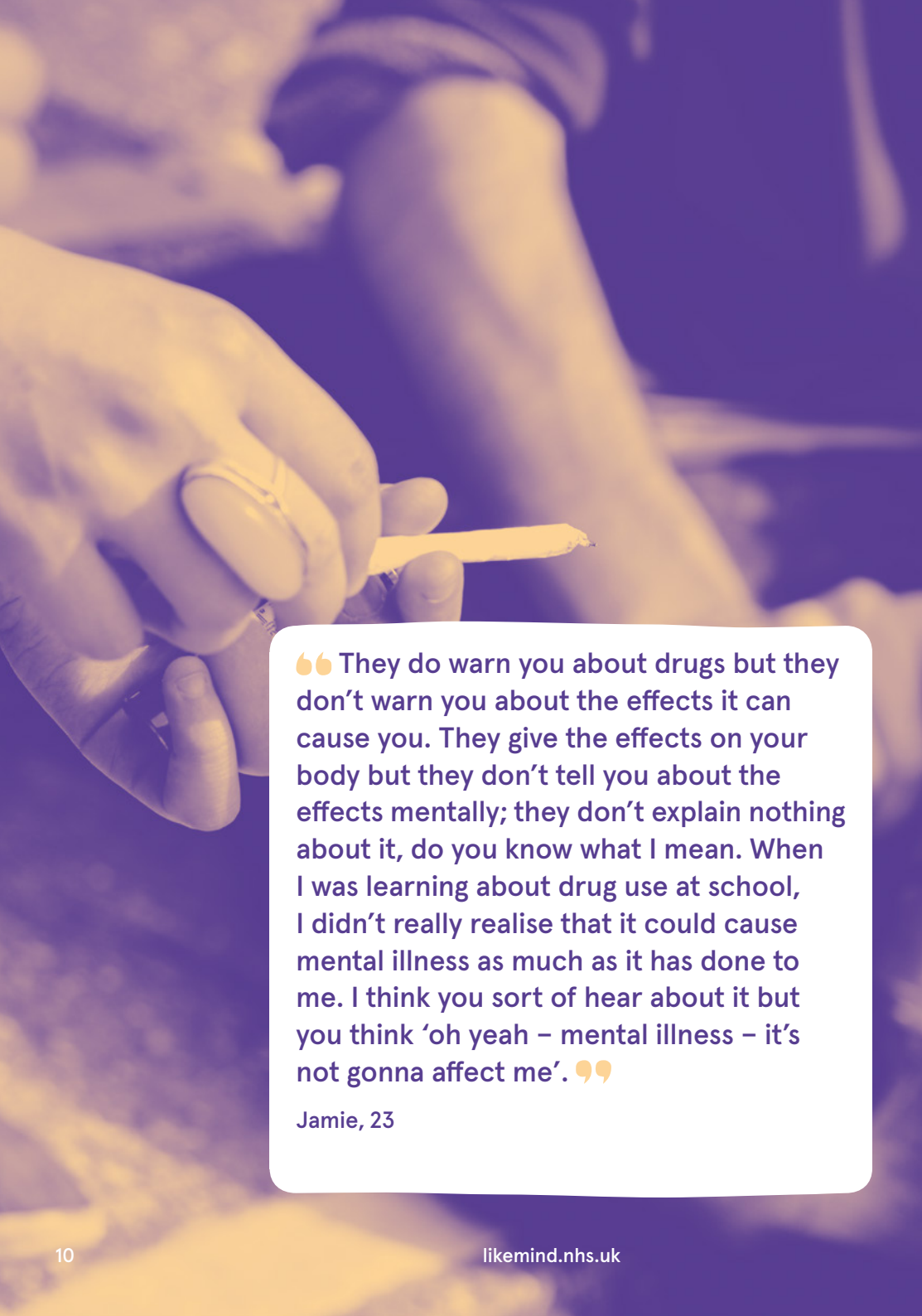
These are all normal parts of drug-taking but if you're still feeling these things a week or two after you last took drugs there's probably something else going on. Again, try talking to someone you trust and then getting some professional advice.

There's lots of ways you can do this and it really does help! Additionally, if you're frequently taking drugs it can become a problem so don't be afraid to take advice on that too. Try having a look on the Talk to Frank website talktofrank.com



“ For two months I'd been going through shit and I thought it was just like a comedown off drugs or something, but then I thought 'oh, it's lasting a bit too long', yeah. ”

Chloe, 19



👂 They do warn you about drugs but they don't warn you about the effects it can cause you. They give the effects on your body but they don't tell you about the effects mentally; they don't explain nothing about it, do you know what I mean. When I was learning about drug use at school, I didn't really realise that it could cause mental illness as much as it has done to me. I think you sort of hear about it but you think 'oh yeah – mental illness – it's not gonna affect me'. 👂

Jamie, 23

Using drugs and alcohol for coping: “How ‘bout a shot of truth in that denial cocktail?” Jennifer Salaiz

Telling what's an effect of drugs and what's a mental health problem is a bit trickier if you're out of it all the time.

It's impossible to tell then, what's the drugs and what's a real problem. The only way to check it out for sure is to give yourself a break, and it might also help you fix the problem yourself! After all, alcohol and drugs can make you feel great but they can also make you feel depressed, anxious, suspicious, paranoid and panicky.

If you drink or take drugs you'll remember the worst hangover ever, or the bad comedown. It's not something you're likely to forget – and it's not just physical, it messes with your head too!

Try taking a complete break from all drugs and alcohol for at least a week or two. If the problem goes away, then it's probably an effect of the drugs and alcohol (you might want to cut it down a bit but that's up to you!).

If the problem's still there a week or two later, when you've not been doing anything, then it's probably more than just the drugs (you might want to talk to someone you trust and then a professional).

If you can't stop, don't panic: talk to someone you trust, a professional or 'Talk to Frank' (talktofrank.com). Even if you stop for two weeks and don't have a problem, you can still develop one, so try to be aware of what's going on for you!

Addressing personal barriers to talking

It's hard enough to talk to people anyway when you're a teenager or young adult. Then add to that talking about mental health with someone you don't even know. That can feel like a nightmare, but it doesn't have to be.

Your worries about talking to someone may be similar to lots of other young people's and adult's worries!

For sure, it can be scary talking about difficult stuff for the first time, but it can be really helpful to share our worries with other people. What about with friends, family, boyfriends or girlfriends? What would be the easiest way to start talking? Why not try writing things down first?

“ I was completely the opposite of strong, you know, I was literally just dead, like a zombie, you know, and so I needed someone to step in and be like, you know, my voice. ”

Jack, 19

Then you could try talking to the easiest person you can find to talk to. You don't have to tell them everything at once but it may help. You could ask someone to come with you to help when you talk to someone, and you could try choosing a comfortable place to meet. Even professionals are flexible and some will meet outside, in a café or in your own home!

If you're still finding it difficult to talk, have a look at the 'Where to get help' page at the back of this booklet for more ideas.

You might have good reasons not to trust people, but things change, and there really might be someone you can trust, you just need to find them!

“ I can't say 'oh you know, I'm being haunted by spirits' or 'I got attacked by demons' to a doctor, because they'll just think 'oh he's crazy'. ”

Tom, 31

“ I don't talk about my past, I don't talk about how I feel, I don't talk about the emotions and all that because it makes me feel vulnerable. ”

Eva, 27

So what's bothering you?

Most people who come to a mental health service don't need more than a few meetings either on their own or with someone they trust, just to get some advice.

Some of the common reasons for seeking help are around stress, anger, tension, sleep problems, low self-esteem, family and relationship problems, alcohol and physical health issues.

Some people have more complex issues like anorexia, obsessive compulsive problems, depression, anxiety and psychosis and in this case you may be offered more support. But remember, this is for you, to allow you to be happy in life. The sooner you get help the better.



How your family might respond

As long as they have all the right information, your family should be able to help you.

Often, in the long run, it's best to involve them too, even if it is hard. We've tried to make that easier by developing a booklet for them too.

It's normal for family to get worried, stressed, angry or emotional when they think there's a problem, but we know that doesn't help you out. So, we've tried to tell them the sort of things that might be helpful for you, like keeping calm, and listening to you.

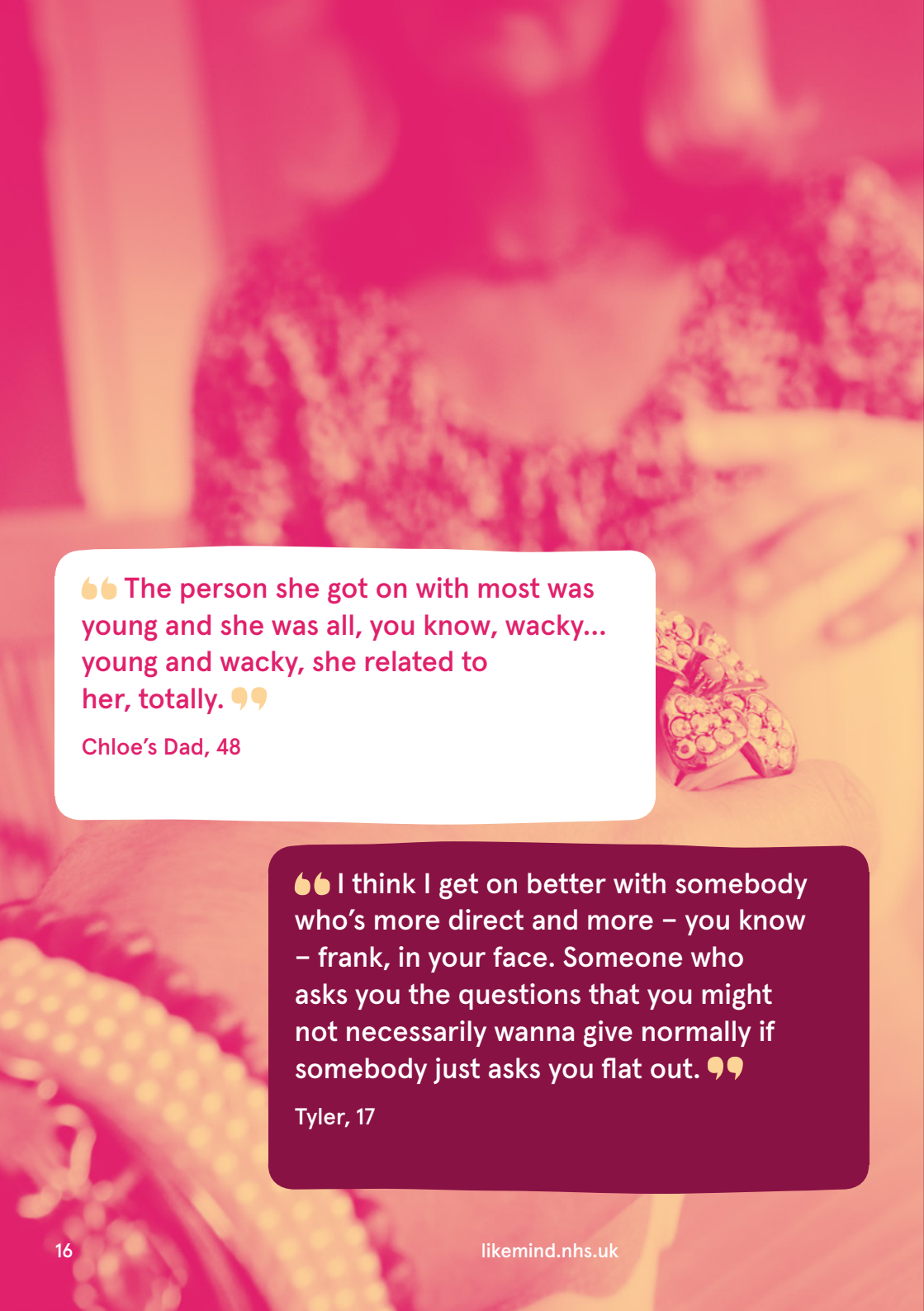
If you're very worried or there's a good reason for them not to be involved, mental health services can keep things confidential. That means they won't tell your family if you don't want them to. The only reason they would have to tell a family member or someone else in that role (nearest relative) is if they, or in some cases you, are in danger of harm. Remember, most of the time involving family actually helps.

You could give them a copy of the 'Friends and Family' booklet if you're worried about their reactions. You can download it from our website [likemind.nhs.uk](https://www.likemind.nhs.uk)

“ My dad actually started to take part a little bit in my sessions with me 'cause he's who I lived with, he saw a lot of my symptoms and stuff. It actually ended up taking him to sit down in one of my sessions and say 'I think Madison needs something more, I think she needs to see a psychiatrist or something, just to step it up a little bit because she's getting quite bad' and then I got help quite quickly. ”

Madison, 20





“ The person she got on with most was young and she was all, you know, wacky... young and wacky, she related to her, totally. ”

Chloe's Dad, 48

“ I think I get on better with somebody who's more direct and more – you know – frank, in your face. Someone who asks you the questions that you might not necessarily wanna give normally if somebody just asks you flat out. ”

Tyler, 17

Getting help: things to expect; things to ask

You will normally be sent a letter suggesting a time to meet.

Sometimes there's a bit of a wait. You can phone up (or even email) and ask for a different time if the suggested time isn't good for you. You can also ask for an earlier time if things are urgent, or phone up (or email) if something's worrying you about the meeting itself.

You'll generally find there's someone helpful on the other end of the phone who can help you to sort things out. If you want to bring a family member or friend with you then that is fine too.

When you do meet, it will be with someone who works in the service, normally for about an hour. They will talk with you about the things that are bothering you. They can often give advice straight away. If they think a mental health service can help, they may take a bit more time to decide what might be most useful, as they'll need to get to know you more first.

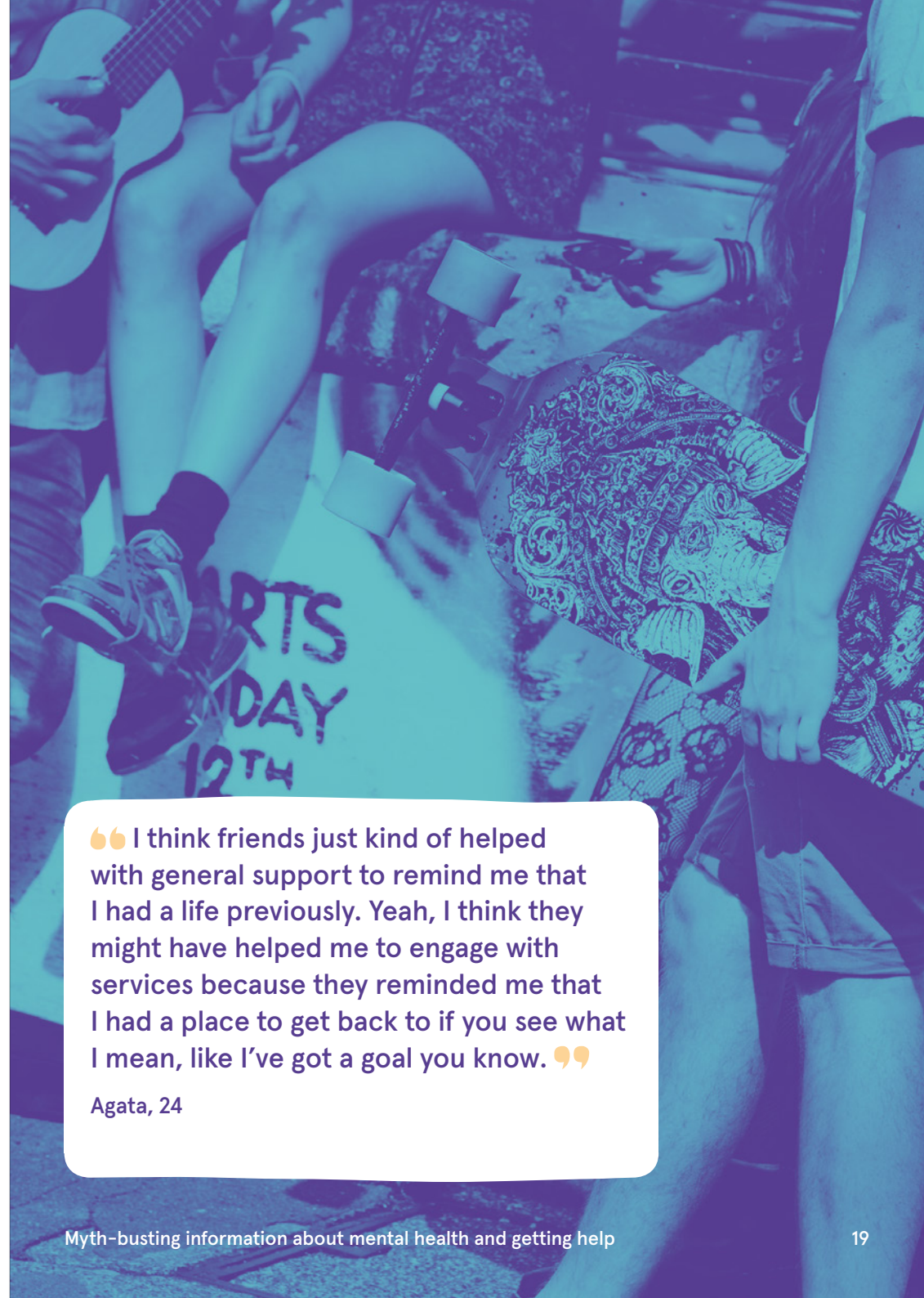
Help might include offering advice and information, groups, talking therapies and medicines. This will depend on what the issue is, what your preferences are and what you want to deal with in the coming weeks or months (your goals). You might want to think beforehand about what's changed in life for you recently and what you want to be different.

If you tell the person who you meet what you want, what you like and what you don't like this will help them to get things right for you – and if you don't like the person you meet, you can always ask to meet someone different and the service will try to help if they can.

Involving friends

Just because you're asking for help with mental health issues, doesn't mean you have to stop doing the ordinary things in life, like seeing friends and going to school, college or work. In fact, services will try to help you to get on with your life more easily and to feel happier.

Friends can help you to get help, and they can help to remind you of the sorts of things you might want to get support with (your goals). If you want to, you can bring a friend along with you when you get help.



“ I think friends just kind of helped with general support to remind me that I had a life previously. Yeah, I think they might have helped me to engage with services because they reminded me that I had a place to get back to if you see what I mean, like I've got a goal you know. ”

Agata, 24

MYTHBUSTER 2

“ They put everyone on medicines! ”

Not true! They won't put everyone on medicines!

There are lots of things that are helpful for mental health issues: like talking therapies; support and advice for getting back into education or work if you want it; help with money and housing; diet; exercise and sleep.

One treatment for mental health issues is medicine, but it's not the only one and medicines aren't right for everything or everyone. You can talk to your family, friends and the service about what would be best for you.

MYTHBUSTER 3

“ They put you in hospital! ”

False! Early intervention services for psychosis definitely don't want to put you in hospital.

Mental health services don't want to put people in hospital because, apart from anything else, it costs a lot of money (about £2,700 per person per week in 2018).

They will be specially focused on other ways of supporting you at home. Only a very small number of people go into hospital and only when things feel really unsafe and risky, which is not often!



MYTHBUSTER 4

““ They judge everyone and give them a diagnosis! ””

Untrue! They won't judge everyone and give them a diagnosis!

Lots of people who get support from a mental health service don't have a specific diagnosis. Rather they're just struggling with some aspect of life and need a bit of support and advice.

In other cases, there is a specific condition at the root of things. Sometimes a diagnosis is helpful, as it can help you and others understand more about what's going on and how to get the right help. Sometimes a diagnosis is not helpful, and that's often linked to stigma again! You can say whether a diagnosis will be helpful for you or not.

““ I've come away from seeing Kelly and I've just felt relieved 'cos I've just got everything off my chest, and that's what's kept me going 'cos I think, every two weeks I see her, and if I'm a bit stressed that goes within that hour. ””

Kwame, 33

Want more information?

This booklet has been developed based on feedback from young people who do and young people who don't use mental health and early intervention in psychosis services (EIP).

You can get copies of this and other booklets on our website likemind.nhs.uk

There's also lots more information on the website on places to go to get help. You can reach your local EIP service and other useful services at the address and phone numbers on the following pages.

“ I think having them lot up there as well, like people that actually care about you and how you are doing, I think that's always a nice thing as well because when you are feeling low you always know there is someone who does actually care. ”

Sam, 16

Where to get help

The most obvious place to get help is to go to your GP, or if you are still at school or college, visit your school or college counsellor, or your local youth service.

Here are some more ideas. Some of the anonymous helplines might be a good start. You could try Saneline, Childline, or the Samaritans. There are also some good websites and a lot of them have helplines, where you can speak to someone.

Some of them have self-help stuff on there, so you can start to do something yourself or with a friend.

It doesn't really matter where you start. As soon as you start talking, someone can point you in the right direction.

If you want some advice from other people, want to see what other people found helpful, or have any advice that you could give yourself, you could have a look at the forum at likemind.nhs.uk



“ I think if you, if you were to see the information online of what the service offered. Umm, that it was all confidential, here to help not to judge, just to make people feel a bit more reassured. Umm, and just make it just as easy as possible to get in touch. ”

Navya, 21

Help lines

Talk to Frank	0300 1236 600 or text 82111
Samaritans	116 123
Childline	0800 1111
Saneline	0300 304 7000
The Mix	0808 808 4884 or text THEMIX to 85258

Self-help resources

talktofrank.com

youngminds.org.uk

samaritans.org

sane.org.uk

childline.org.uk

themix.org.uk

moodgym.com.au

Self-help courses for low mood and depression

littf.com

Free web based self-help course based on cognitive behavioural therapy principles

...and remember:

“ One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. ”

Nietzsche

Your care coordinator or lead practitioner is:

© 2019 Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

(Professor Kathryn Greenwood, Dr Kirsty Labuschagne, Dr Clio Berry, Dr Emmanuelle Peters, Dr Rebecca Webb, Dr Richard de Visser, Professor Philippa Garety, Professor Andy Field, Ruth Chandler and the Service User Research Forum).

A special thanks to williamjoseph.co.uk (design), Jim Holden (photography) and all of our photography models.

In association with:

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



US
UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

UEA
University of East Anglia

 **Queen Mary**
University of London



**INSTITUTE OF
PSYCHIATRY,
PSYCHOLOGY
& NEUROSCIENCE**

MCPin
Foundation

NHS
Pennine Care
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
South London
and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Greater Manchester
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Sussex Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Southern Health
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Central and
North West London
NHS Foundation Trust