

OPTIMISE
Healthcare Group



Post- Assessment Resource Pack

Patient Information

Support when a diagnosis of
ADHD is not made



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I Was Not Diagnosed with ADHD

What now?

Receiving the outcome of an ADHD assessment can bring up many emotions, especially when the result is that you **do not** meet the criteria for an ADHD diagnosis. You might feel relieved to have some clarity, or you may feel confused, disappointed, or unsure about what the next steps should be. All of these reactions are valid.

For many people, seeking an ADHD assessment comes after years of facing challenges in school, work, or relationships. Learning that these difficulties are not attributed to ADHD can be surprising, and it may take time to make sense of the outcome. You may still recognise aspects of your experience in stories from people with ADHD, or you might find yourself reflecting on earlier moments in life and wondering what contributed to the struggles you faced.

Not receiving a diagnosis does not invalidate your experiences. Many people continue to explore other explanations or support options that better match their needs. Some choose to focus on psychosocial approaches such as coaching, support groups, or therapy, while others find benefit in lifestyle adjustments, skill-building strategies, or further discussions with healthcare professionals about alternative diagnoses or contributing factors.

This booklet is designed to guide you through the next steps. It offers a range of supportive resources and practical strategies that may help you manage the difficulties or symptoms you're experiencing, regardless of the assessment outcome.

A non-ADHD result is not the end of your journey—it is simply one part of understanding yourself and finding the support that works best for you.

Executive Dysfunction

Executive dysfunction is a behavioural symptom that disrupts a person's ability to manage their own thoughts, emotions and actions.

Main Executive Functions

Working Memory

Involves what you are doing right now, you are using your working memory to retain current information for future use. You use working memory when having a conversation, taking notes, reading information.

Cognitive Flexibility

Refers to how well you are able to switch from one topic to another, the more flexible your thinking is the better you are able to adjust to things changing around you.

Inhibition Control

Your ability to manage your thoughts, emotions and actions. Without this, we would be unable to control our impulses.

- Behavioural control - relates to your ability to stop yourself from doing things you know you shouldn't do
- Interference control - the ability to control your thoughts staying focused not allowing yourself to become distracted.

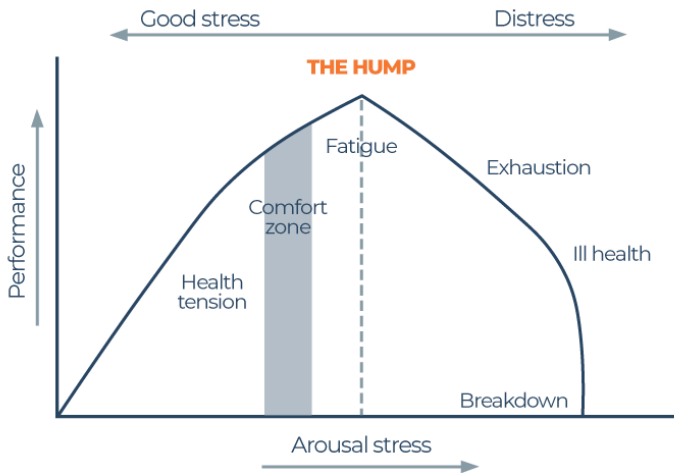
Therefore, if a person struggles with executive dysfunction, they find things like impulse control, extremely difficult.

Managing Executive Dysfunction



Treatment strategies often include medication, behavioral therapy, and lifestyle adjustments. It's important to note that while executive dysfunction is closely associated with ADHD, it can also occur in conjunction with other conditions. Understanding and support from family, educators, and employers can significantly improve outcomes for those affected.

Human Function Curve



Adapted from Nixon P, Practitioner, 1979. Sleep Advisor

While many of us commonly encounter stressors in day to day life, the difference in Good Stress and Distress is important to acknowledge.

Distress is long-term and impacts on all areas of life, it is linked to poor mental health, tension in relationships, poor physical health and burnout.

Good stress challenges us, pushes us to achieve more and become more productive but also requires boundaries and self-awareness to ensure that we do not become fatigued and exhausted.

The danger of 'the comfort zone', many people remain within their comfort zone to limit anxiety in encountering new experiences. However, it also limits potential and can lead to a lack of fulfilment and challenges which can in turn make us less motivated as the rewards are often lesser.



Organisation and Time Management

To do Lists

Useful in breaking down your plan for the day and assisting with prioritisation.

Reminders

Calendar reminders, apps to manage your diary and appointments.

Post-it Notes

Many people enjoy the satisfaction of crumpling these up once completed. It also allows for tasks to be broken down into smaller, more manageable information.

Time Limits

Limiting yourself to ten, twenty or thirty minutes per task. This will make them appear more manageable and prevent you from becoming hyper-fixated as you know your reminder tells you to move on.

Start with the Daunting Task

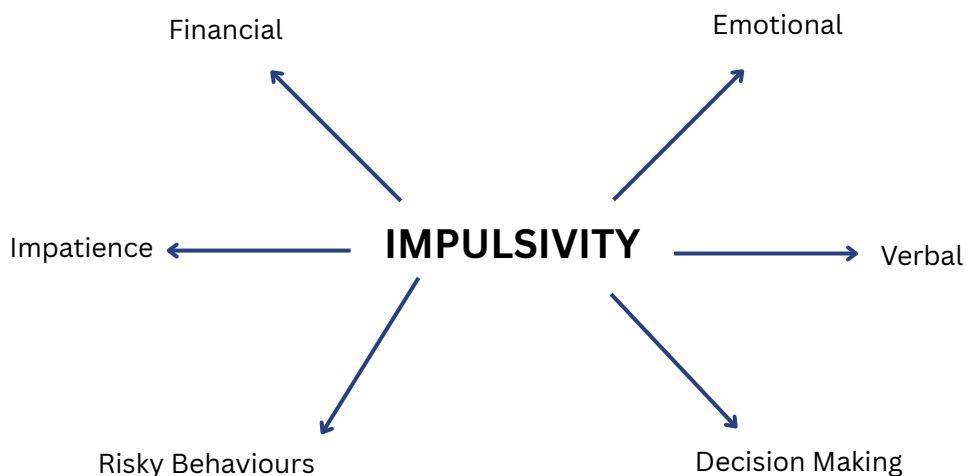
A lot of the time, we avoid the most difficult or stressful task which means it ends up lingering over us whereas starting with that task will motivate you to complete the easier ones after.

Reward Yourself

Motivation is a big struggle for many neurodivergent people, particularly if you are doing something new or a task you have previously struggled with. No matter how small the task may seem, reward yourself when you complete it and acknowledge the time and effort required to do so.



Impulsivity



Financial

People may make purchases that they don't need or cannot afford which can lead to debt.

Decision Making

Making rash decisions based off emotion or without considering all options which they may later regret.

Verbal

Blurting things out and interrupting others which can come across rude or abrupt.

Emotional

May be more prone to outbursts of intense emotion which can be overwhelming for both the patient and their families and friends.

Risk-taking Behaviour

Engaging in unsafe behaviours such as drugs, crime and promiscuity.

Impatience

Difficulty queuing or waiting your turn.

Managing Symptoms of Impulsivity

Self-compassion - Be kind to yourself, normalise mistakes and acknowledge the ability to make amends. Ensure you celebrate your progress in managing your impulsivity.

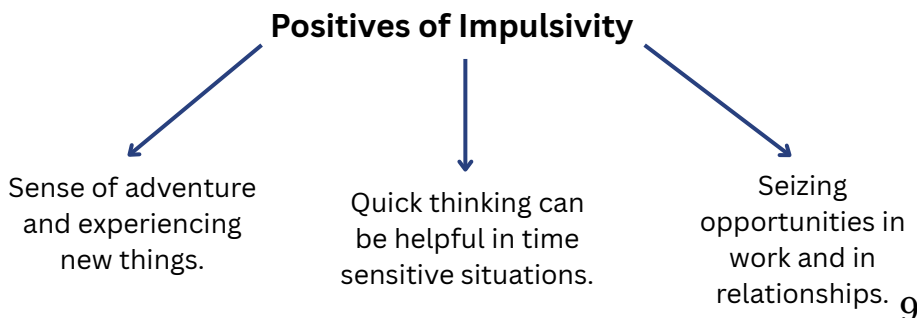
Mindfulness can help to regulate emotions by grounding you. This helps to provide perspective when you may be overwhelmed with emotions.

Identifying and reducing your triggers - Recognising your triggers and the behaviours that follow can be very effective in allowing you to manage them.

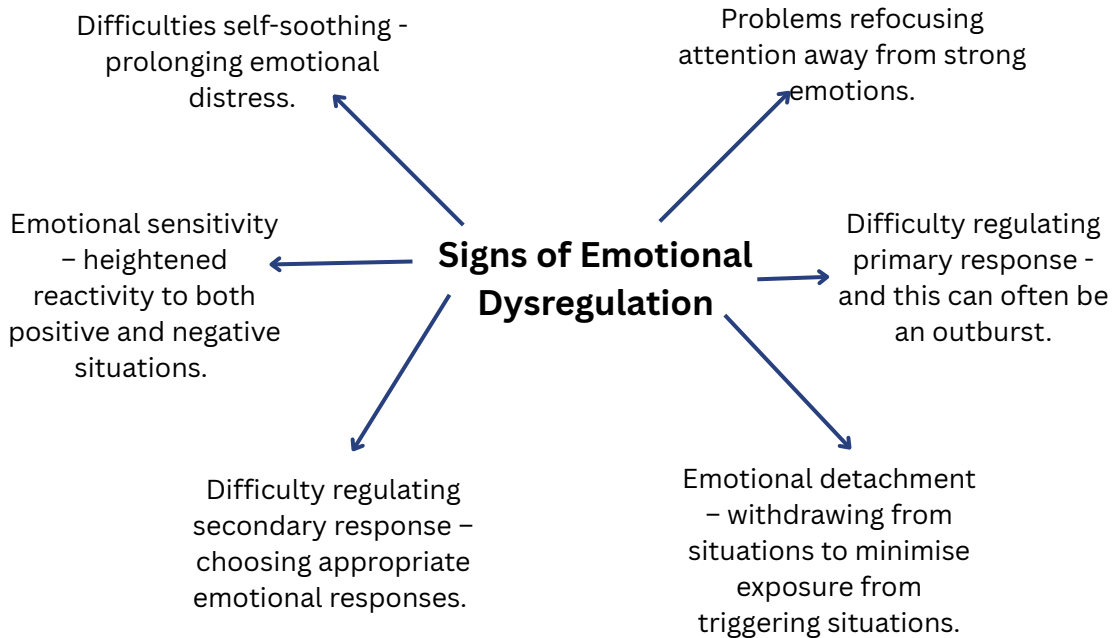
10 second rule - Wait at least 10 seconds before responding, allow yourself time and space to think clearly about your reaction.

Take responsibility - Apologise for outbursts or reactions that hurt or upset others. Utilise techniques that allow you to avoid this happening again.

- Unsubscribe from marketing emails.
- Unsave card details from online shopping portals.
- Avoid places and people that overwhelm you.
- Create budgets to help manage your income and spending.
- Break big jobs down into little tasks.



Emotional Dysregulation



Self Help

·Write your feelings – Try and explain what you are feeling and why you might be feeling this. This will help you identify situations that may cause this and avoid it.

·Exercise – Along with this being good for general mental health, it can help when you feel reactive when dealing with high emotions. This will give you time to evaluate the situation and think about your next steps

·Listen to music/play an instrument –This is a good way to step back and recharge.

·Make a list of your coping mechanisms – You know what helps you, making a list can help you identify what works the best for yourself.

Resources for Those Living with or Experiencing Addiction

It's important for those dealing with addiction to seek comprehensive treatment. Professional help can provide strategies for addressing the addictive behaviours, leading to a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. This might include therapy, support groups, and possibly medication-assisted treatment.

Remember, what works for one person may not work for another, so it's important to find the right combination of strategies that work for you.



adfam.org.uk

Information and support for friends and family of people with drug or alcohol problems.



0800 9177 650

help@aamail.org (email helpline)

alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

0300 123 6600

talktofrank.com

FRANK

Confidential advice and information about drugs, their effects and the law.

Turning Point

turning-point.co.uk



Health and social care services in England for people with a learning disability. Also supports people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse or unemployment.

We Are With You

wearewithyou.org.uk

withyou

Supports people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems, and their friends and family.

Sober Sidekick

<https://www.sobersidekick.com/>



Downloadable app and social network for iOS and Android that helps you maintain your sobriety by connecting with a community of people.

Sleep Hygiene

Physical and mental health both benefit from good sleep and knowing how to do this can improve your overall wellbeing. Following the below guide can help improve your sleep.

-Turning your phone off

Limiting screen time before you plan to sleep will help to limit mind-racing. Instead try other things like reading, crafting or listening to music. You can set times on your phone to start winding down and start relaxing at bed time.

-Meditation

Some find that listening to white noise, waves, calming music can help to focus them and this is a great time to practice mindfulness. Find details on this on page 22 of this booklet.

-Comfort

Make your room a place that you enjoy being in of an evening following a busy day, try and avoid working or studying in your room to promote the association of your room and sleep as opposed to productivity and busyness

-Diet and exercise

Regular exercise and a balanced diet have been linked to a better quality of sleep. Avoid eating large meals, having caffeine, alcohol or nicotine close to bedtime as these can all keep you awake. Also avoid exercising too close to bedtime as this can also make you more energetic.

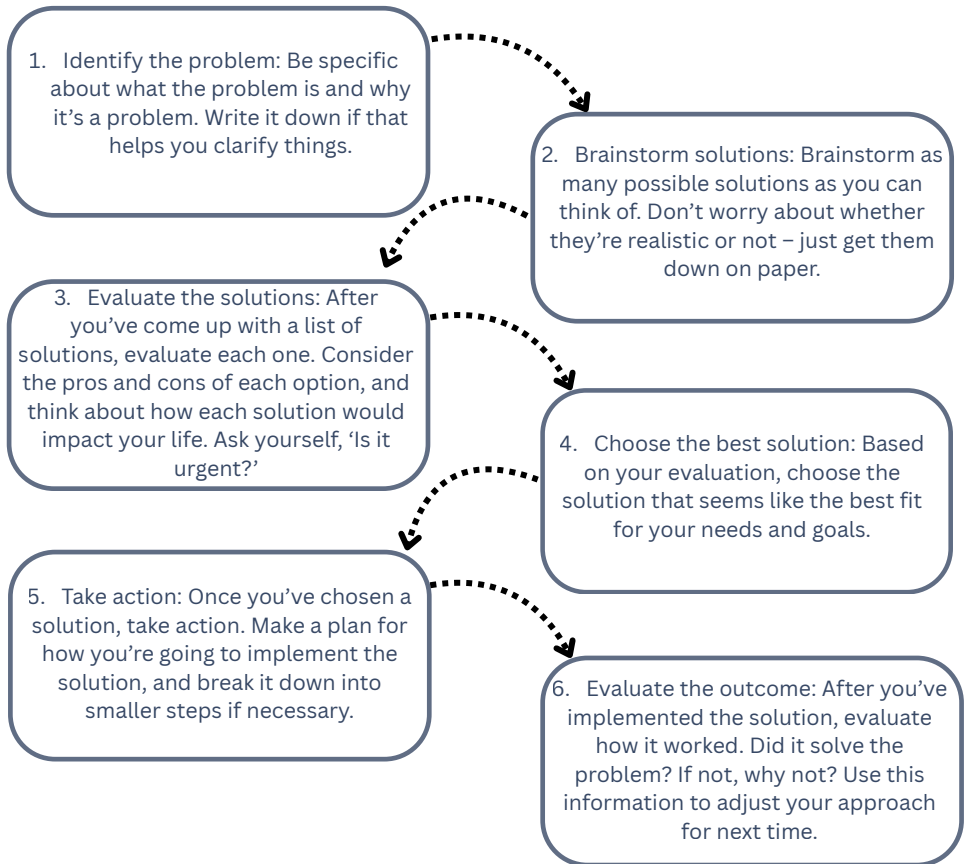
-Sleep routine

Having a regular sleep routine can help improve your sleep. Ensuring you get to bed and get up from bed at a fixed time can help with this, even on weekends!



Problem Solving and Planning

Problem solving skills are essential to help organise / manage daily tasks and activities.

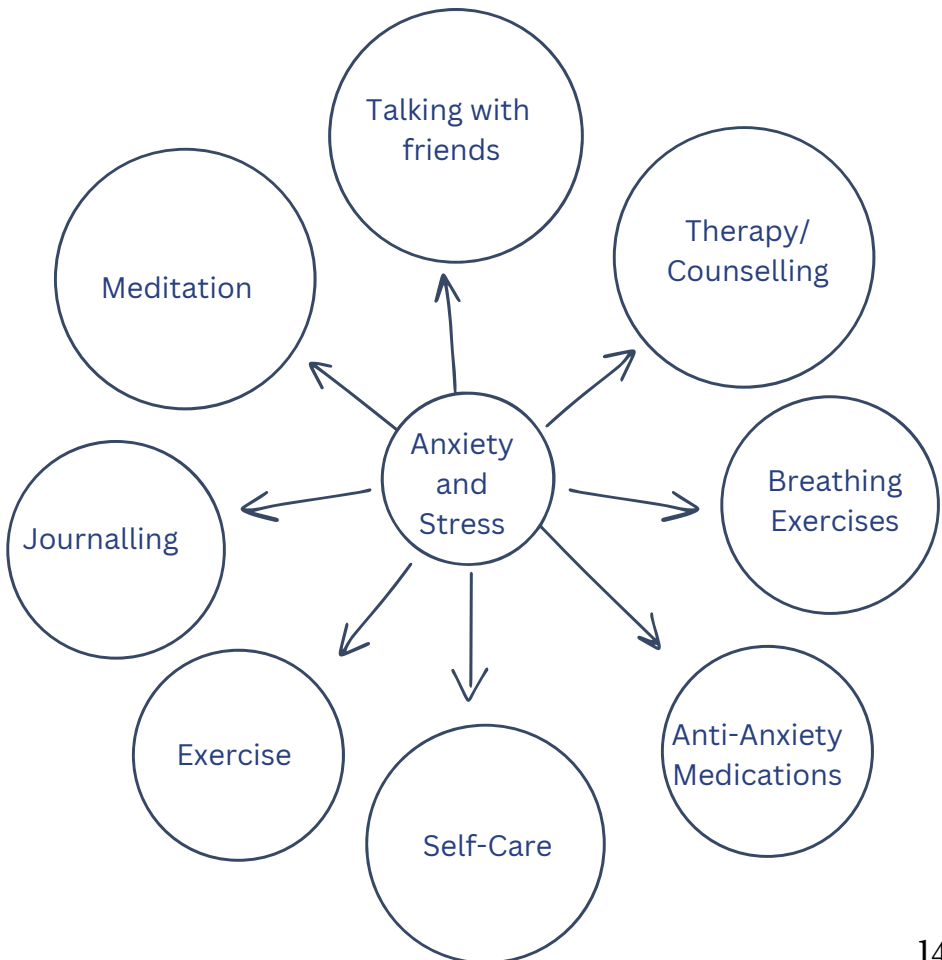


Tip: set realistic timers to keep yourself on track, for example, work on a project for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break.

Don't forget to celebrate the small wins when you get something completed!

Anxiety and Managing Stress

Everybody's reactions to change is different and it is understandable to be apprehensive about change particularly when it is unexpected. There are ways of managing our anxiety when these changes do happen. The below mind map details just a few suggestions from the NHS and MIND charity on how to manage anxiety levels.



Grounding Techniques



Grounding techniques are used to help bring us back into the ‘here and now,’ to reconnect with ourselves, our bodies, and our present reality. These strategies are often focused on asking ‘grounding questions’ or having something ‘grounding’ to do. You could either be guided through these and if found to be successful could then be encouraged to attempt independently at times when you are feeling overwhelmed.

You may find it helpful to focus on your senses to ‘ground’ back into the body.

You can encourage yourself to:

- Practice the ‘54321’ technique – 5 things I can SEE, 4 things I can FEEL or TOUCH, 3 things I can HEAR, 2 things I can SMELL or TASTE, and take 1 BIG BREATH.
- Pick up or touch items near you that you can focus on identifying or labelling. Are the things soft or hard? Heavy or light? Warm or cool? Focus on the texture and colour of each item. Challenge yourself to think of specific colours, such as crimson, burgundy, indigo, or turquoise, instead of simply red or blue.
- Breathe deeply: Slowly inhale, then exhale. If it helps, you can say or think “in” and “out” with each breath. Support yourself to breathe by filling your lungs and note how it feels to push it back out.



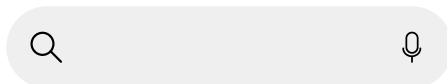
Grounding Techniques Continued...

- Move your body: For example, go for a short walk while focusing on the sensation of your feet on the floor, or do some exercise while describing how your body moves and feels.
- Recite something. Think of a poem, song, or book passage you know by heart. Encourage yourself to recite it quietly to yourself or in your head.
- Practice self-kindness. Support yourself to repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself: 'You're having a rough time, but you'll make it through,' 'You're strong, and you can move through this,' 'You're trying hard, and you're doing your best.' Encourage yourself to practise these phrases aloud or in your head, as many times as you need.
- Take a shower or a bath: This small thing can make make you physically aware of your body and heat can be physically relaxing.
- Feet on the floor: This exercise helps to ground you — to feel stable and connected to the earth. Some people like to do it barefoot, especially outside on grass, gently shifting their weight to feel the contact with the ground. It's a simple way to reconnect with nature and remind yourself that you're part of something larger than yourself.



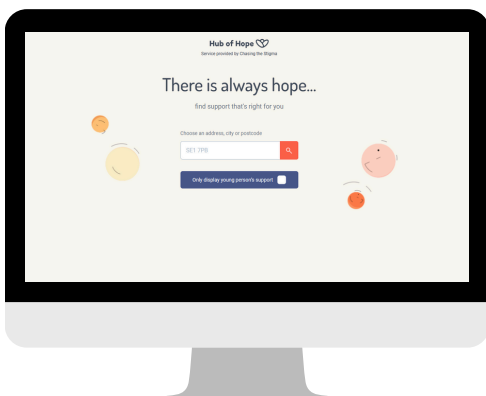
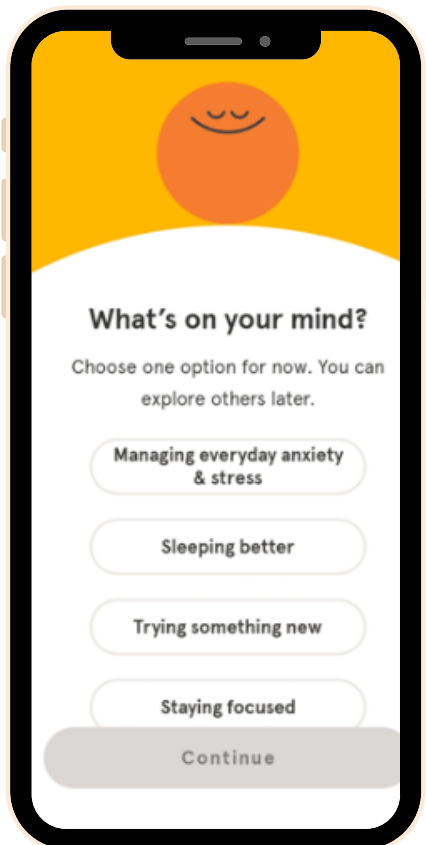
Depression and Anxiety

Apps for your phone



In Hand, Mindshift, Headspace, Calm and Hub of Hope

Apps on the go that offer grounding techniques, meditation and sign posting to more appropriate services.



Psychosocial Interventions

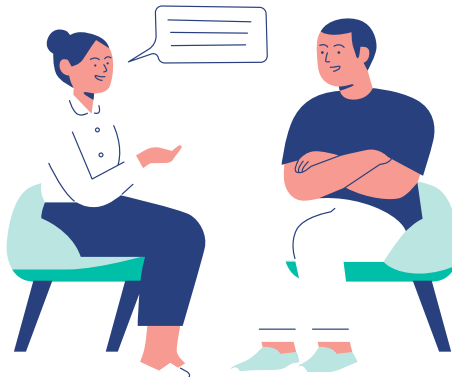
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that has been found to be effective for a variety of conditions. It's a structured, goal-oriented therapy that can make a significant difference in managing symptoms and enhancing overall life functioning.

It focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviours. Using techniques such as successive approximation, which breaks tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, can be particularly beneficial. Research suggests that combining CBT with medication may lead to better outcomes than medication alone.

CBT can be useful in tackling co-morbid conditions such as anxiety and depression. It operates on the principle that negative thought patterns and behaviours can be identified, challenged, and altered to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.

CBT is structured, goal-oriented, and focuses on the present. It teaches individuals coping strategies to change their thought patterns and behaviours that contribute to their anxiety and depression.



Help in Crisis

Emergency Crisis Services

If you feel you are unable to keep yourself safe and require immediate support, please call 999 or attend your local A&E department

Local Crisis Services

Contact 111 for details of crisis services in your local area

NO MORE suicide

Website offers clear and immediate support options to those who may be suffering with thoughts of suicide or people who know someone struggling. It offers early intervention information. The website can also be helpful to those who have been bereaved by suicide.

Supporting the victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage

<https://karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Stay alive app

Allows access to lots of support services and contact can be made by phone, text, live chat or online support.

You can call any of the following if you feel you need to talk to someone but are not in a crisis:

Samaritans - phone: 116 123

Papyrus - phone: 0800 068 41 41

CALM - phone: 0800 58 58 58

SHOUT - Text (85258)

Safeguarding

If you believe that you or someone you care for is vulnerable or at risk of harm, neglect, exploitation, or abuse, it is important to seek help promptly. Anyone can make a referral to their local safeguarding team.



If you or a family member are at risk, please reach out for support without delay. You can contact your GP, local safeguarding team, or appropriate authorities who are trained to assist in these situations. Additionally, you can call 111 for crisis support, safeguarding advice, and to be directed to relevant services.

If there is an immediate or imminent risk to you or a loved one, please call 999.

You can find contact details for your local safeguarding services here:

<https://safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk/contacts/>

