

***‘’Our fathers, partners, brothers and friends face a health crisis that isn’t being talked about. Men are dying too young. We can’t afford to stay silent’’***

***‘’That’s why we’re taking action.***

***We’re the only charity tackling men’s health on a global scale, year round. We’re addressing some of the biggest health issues faced by men: prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health and suicide prevention.***

***We know what works for men, and how to find and fund the most innovative research to have both a global and local impact. We're independent of government funding, so we can challenge the status quo and invest quicker in what works. In 13 years we’ve funded more than 1,200 men’s health projects around the world.***

***By 2030 we’ll reduce the number of men dying prematurely by 25%.***

***Help us stop men dying too young’’ Movember (2017)***

**In light of November being ‘’Movember’’ month, this booklet is designed to address mental health in the work place and provide coping techniques and methods that can be used in the work place and home life.**

**Please never suffer in silence, Northern gas networks provide Care line for any work to discuss any issues they may be affecting an individual. You can call at any time free of charge on 01452 623200.**

**Top tips for ‘’being a man’’:**

## How? Here are our top five things to know, and do.

#### 1. Make man time.

Stay connected. Your mates are important and spending time with them is good for you. Catch up regularly, check in and make time.



#### 2. Have open conversations.

You don’t need to be an expert and you don’t have to be the sole solution, but being there for someone, listening and giving your time can be life-saving.

**70% of men say their friends can rely on them for support, but only 48% say that they rely on their friends. In other words: we’re here for our mates, but worried about asking for help for ourselves. Reaching out is crucial.**

[**We need to talk**](http://uk.movember.com/mens-health/mental-health)

[**We need to listen**](http://uk.movember.com/mens-health/mental-health)

#### 3. Know the numbers.

At **50**, talk to your doctor about prostate cancer and whether it’s right for you to have a PSA test. If you are black or have a father or brother with prostate cancer, you should be having this conversation at **45**. Know your numbers, know your risk, talk to your doctor.



[**Learn more about prostate cancer**](http://uk.movember.com/mens-health/prostate-cancer)

#### 4. Know thy nuts. Simple.

Get to know what’s normal for your testicles. Give them a check regularly and go to the doctor if something doesn’t feel right.

[**Learn more about testicular cancer**](http://uk.movember.com/mens-health/testicular-cancer)

#### 5. Move, more.

Add more activity to your day. Do more of what makes you feel good.

* Take a walking meeting
* Park further away from the station
* Get off the bus a stop or two earlier
* Instead of the lift, take the stairs

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**Top 10 stress busting tips:**

# **10 stress busters**

**If you're stressed, whether by your job or by something more personal, the first step to feeling better is to identify the cause.**

The most unhelpful thing you can do is turn to something unhealthy to help you cope, such as smoking or [drinking](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx).

"In life, there's always a solution to a problem," says Professor Cary Cooper, an occupational health expert at the University of Lancaster. "Not taking control of the situation and doing nothing will only make your problems worse."

He says the keys to good stress management are building emotional strength, being in control of your situation, having a good social network and adopting a positive outlook.

Check out our selection of [stress-busting apps](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/?category=Mental%20Health) in the Digital Apps Library.

## What you can do to address stress

These are Professor Cooper's top 10 stress-busting suggestions:

### **Be active**

Exercise won't make your stress disappear, but it will reduce some of the emotional intensity that you're feeling, clearing your thoughts and letting you to deal with your problems more calmly.

For more advice, read [how being active helps mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx).

[Get started with exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-guides.aspx).

### **Take control**

There's a solution to any problem. "If you remain passive, thinking, 'I can't do anything about my problem', your stress will get worse," says Professor Cooper. "That feeling of loss of control is one of the main causes of stress and lack of wellbeing."

The act of taking control is in itself empowering, and it's a crucial part of finding a solution that satisfies you and not someone else.

Read tips on [how to manage your time](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/time-management-tips.aspx).

### **Connect with people**

A good support network of colleagues, friends and family can ease your work troubles and help you see things in a different way.

"If you don't connect with people, you won't have support to turn to when you need help," says Professor Cooper.

The activities we do with friends help us relax. We often have a good laugh with them, which is an excellent stress reliever.

"Talking things through with a friend will also help you find solutions to your problems," says Professor Cooper.

Read about some [other ways relationships help our wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Connect-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx).

### **Have some 'me time'**

Here in the UK, we work the longest hours in Europe, meaning we often don't spend enough time doing things we really enjoy.

"We all need to take some time for socialising, relaxation or exercise," says Professor Cooper.

He recommends setting aside a couple of nights a week for some quality "me time" away from work. "By earmarking those two days, it means you won't be tempted to work overtime," he says.

### **Challenge yourself**

Setting yourself goals and challenges, whether at work or outside, such as learning a new language or a new sport, helps to build confidence. This will help you deal with stress.

"By continuing to learn, you become more emotionally resilient as a person," says Professor Cooper. "It arms you with knowledge and makes you want to do things rather than be passive, such as watching TV all the time."

### **Avoid unhealthy habits**

Don't rely on alcohol, smoking and caffeine as your ways of coping. "Men more than women are likely to do this. We call this avoidance behaviour," says Professor Cooper. "Women are better at seeking support from their social circle."

Over the long term, these crutches won't solve your problems. They'll just create new ones. "It's like putting your head in the sand," says Professor Cooper. "It might provide temporary relief, but it won't make the problems disappear. You need to tackle the cause of your stress."

### **Help other people**

Professor Cooper says evidence shows that people who help others, through activities such as [volunteering](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/volunteering/Pages/Volunteeringhome.aspx) or community work, become more resilient.

"Helping people who are often in situations worse than yours will help you put your problems into perspective," says Professor Cooper. "The more you give, the more resilient and happy you feel."

If you don't have time to volunteer, try to do someone a favour every day. It can be something as small as helping someone to cross the road or going on a coffee run for colleagues.

See more on [giving for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/give-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx).

### **Work smarter, not harder**

Working smarter means prioritising your work, concentrating on the tasks that will make a real difference.

"Leave the least important tasks to last," says Cooper. "Accept that your in-tray will always be full. Don't expect it to be empty at the end of the day."

Read some tips on [how to manage your time better](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Time-management-tips.aspx).

### **Try to be positive**

Look for the positives in life, and things for which you're grateful. "People don't always appreciate what they have," says Professor Cooper. "Try to be glass half full instead of glass half empty," he says.

Try writing down three things that went well, or for which you're grateful, at the end of every day.

[Listen to an audio guide on beating unhelpful thinking](https://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/unhelpful-thinking-podcast.aspx?searchtype=Tag&searchterm=Mental+health__Moodzone&).

### **Accept the things you can't change**

Changing a difficult situation isn't always possible. Try to concentrate on the things you do have control over.

"If your company is going under and is making redundancies, for example, there's nothing you can do about it," says Professor Cooper.

"In a situation like that, you need to focus on the things that you can control, such as looking for a new job." **NHS UK (2017)**

**How to be happier:**

**Try our six tips to help you be happier, more in control, and able to cope better with life's ups and downs.**

You may also be interested in our selection of [mental health apps and tools](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/?category=Mental%20Health) in the Digital Apps Library.

## Manage your stress levels

If you have a lot of stress in your life, find ways to reduce it, such as learning a few [time-management techniques](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/time-management-tips.aspx) or talking to your boss about changing your working hours.

Introduce [regular exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/getting-started-guides/pages/getting-started-guides.aspx) and time to yourself. These are positive changes. Taking control of your time in this way can effectively reduce stress.

If you have feelings of anxiety along with your stress, breathing techniques can help. Try this [breathing exercise for stress](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/ways-relieve-stress.aspx).

## Use humour and enjoy yourself

Try to see the funny side of situations and you'll often be able to cope better. Jokes have a way of making worries seem less important.

Doing things that you enjoy is also good for your emotional wellbeing. Simple activities like watching sports with a friend, having a soak in the bath, or meeting up with friends for coffee can all improve your day.

Doing something you're good at, such as cooking or dancing, is a good way to enjoy yourself and have a sense of achievement.

Try to avoid things that seem enjoyable at the time but make you feel worse afterwards, such as drinking too much alcohol or eating junk food.

## Boost your self-esteem

[Self-esteem](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Dealingwithlowself-esteem.aspx) is the way you feel about yourself. The best way to improve your self-esteem is to treat yourself as you would treat a valued friend, in a positive but honest way.

Notice when you're putting yourself down, such as thinking, "You're so stupid for not getting that job", and instead think, "Would I say that to my best friend?". You probably wouldn't.

Tell yourself something positive instead, such as: "You're a bright person, you'll get the next job".

## Have a healthy lifestyle

**Limit your alcohol intake**

When times are hard, it's tempting to drink alcohol because it "numbs" painful feelings. But it can exaggerate some feelings and make you feel angry or aggressive. It can also make you feel more depressed.

Read more about the effects of alcohol on your health and get simple [tips to help you cut down](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx).

### **Choose a well-balanced diet**

Making healthy choices about your diet can make you feel emotionally stronger. You're doing something positive for yourself, which lifts your self-esteem.

A good diet helps your brain and body work efficiently, too. Aim to have a balanced diet that includes all the [main food groups](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx).

### **Do some exercise**

Even moderate exercise releases chemicals in your brain that lift your mood. It can help you [sleep better](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/insomnia/Pages/bedtimeritual.aspx), have more energy and [keep your heart healthy](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Healthyhearts/Pages/Healthyheartshome.aspx).

Choose an exercise that you enjoy. If it helps, do it with a friend or listen to music. Adults should aim for 150 minutes a week.

See [how exercise can help with depression](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Exercise-for-depression.aspx).

### **Get enough sleep**

Around seven to eight hours is the average amount of sleep an adult needs for their body and mind to fully rest.

Writing a "to do" list for the next day before bed can organise your thoughts and clear your mind of any distractions.

Get [more tips to help you drop off](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/insomnia/Pages/bedtimeritual.aspx).

## Talk and share

Communication is important, whether it's with a friend, family member or counsellor.

Talking things through helps you to release tension, rather than keeping it inside. It helps strengthen your relationships and connect with people.

Lots of people find talking to a counsellor about things that are troubling them very helpful.

See [Benefits of talking therapy](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/benefits-of-talking-therapy.aspx) and [Can I get free counselling?](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/free-therapy-or-counselling.aspx) for more information.

If you want to talk anonymously or urgently, you can call the [Samaritans](http://www.samaritans.org.uk/) 24 hours a day on 116 123.

Read more about [depression support groups](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/depression-help-groups.aspx).

## Build your resilience

Resilience is what allows you to cope with life's ups and downs. Making something worthwhile out of painful times helps your resilience grow.

Starting a support group to help others, or making something creative out of bad experiences by, for example, writing, painting or singing, can help you express pain and get through hard times.

See [Five ways to build your mental resilience](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx).

**Useful links:**

[**https://uk.movember.com/mens-health/we-need-to-talk**](https://uk.movember.com/mens-health/we-need-to-talk)

[**https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/training-and-e-learning/**](https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/training-and-e-learning/)

[**https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx**](https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx)

[**https://www.thecalmzone.net/about-calm/what-is-calm/**](https://www.thecalmzone.net/about-calm/what-is-calm/)

**5 ways to build your mental resilience:**

**Evidence suggests there are five steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing.**

If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.

**What is mental wellbeing?**

Sarah Stewart-Brown, professor of public health at the University of Warwick and a wellbeing expert, says: "Feeling happy is a part of mental wellbeing. But it’s far from the whole.

"Feelings of contentment, enjoyment, confidence and engagement with the world are all a part of mental wellbeing. [Self-esteem](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Dealingwithlowself-esteem.aspx) and self-confidence are, too.

"So is a feeling that you can do the things you want to do. And so are good relationships, which bring joy to you and those around you.

"Of course, good mental wellbeing does not mean that you never experience feelings or situations that you find difficult,” says Professor Stewart-Brown. "But it does mean that you feel you have the resilience to cope when times are tougher than usual."

It can help to think about "being well" as something you do, rather than something you are. The more you put in, the more you are likely to get out.

"No-one can give wellbeing to you. It's you who has to take action," says Professor Stewart-Brown.

Five steps to mental wellbeing

Below are five things that, according to research, can really help to boost our mental wellbeing:

* **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships. Learn more in [Connect for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/connect-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx).
* **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. Learn more in [Get active for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx).
* **Keep learning**– learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike? Find out more in [Learn for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/learn-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx).
* **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks. Learn more in [Give for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/give-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx).
* **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Learn more in [Mindfulness for mental wellbeing](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx).

Listen to some [audio guides to boost your mood](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides.aspx).

**How to deal with panic attacks:**

**A panic attack is a feeling of sudden and intense anxiety.**

Panic attacks can also have physical symptoms, including shaking, feeling disorientated, nausea, rapid, irregular heartbeats, dry mouth, [breathlessness](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/shortness-of-breath/Pages/Introduction.aspx), sweating and dizziness.

The symptoms of a panic attack are not dangerous, but can be very frightening.

They can make you feel as though you are having a [heart attack](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Heart-attack/Pages/Introduction.aspx), or that you are going to collapse or even die.

Most panic attacks last somewhere from five minutes to half an hour.

Check out our selection of [mental health apps and tools](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/?category=Mental%20Health) for conditions like panic attacks in the Digital Apps Library.

**How to handle a panic attack**

Professor Paul Salkovskis, Professor of Clinical Psychology and Applied Science at the University of Bath, says it's important not to let your fear of panic attacks control you.

"Panic attacks always pass and the symptoms are not a sign of anything harmful happening," he says. "Tell yourself that the symptoms you're experiencing are caused by [anxiety](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-panic.aspx)."

He says don't look for distractions. "Ride out the attack. Try to keep doing things. If possible, don't leave the situation until the anxiety has subsided."

"Confront your fear. If you don't run away from it, you're giving yourself a chance to discover that nothing's going to happen."

As the anxiety begins to pass, start to focus on your surroundings and continue to do what you were doing before.

"If you’re having a short, sudden panic attack, it can be helpful to have someone with you, reassuring you that it will pass and the symptoms are nothing to worry about," says Professor Salkovskis.

Breathing exercise for panic attacks

If you’re breathing quickly during a panic attack, doing a [breathing exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/ways-relieve-stress.aspx) can ease your other symptoms. Try this:

* Breathe in as slowly, deeply and gently as you can, through your nose.
* Breathe out slowly, deeply and gently through your mouth.
* Some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five on each in-breath and each out-breath.
* Close your eyes and focus on your breathing.

You should start to feel better in a few minutes. You may feel tired afterwards.

Visit the No Panic website for another [breathing exercise to calm panic](http://www.nopanic.org.uk/panic-attack/).

Ways to prevent panic attacks

"You need to try to work out what particular [stress](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-stress.aspx) you might be under that could make your symptoms worse," says Professor Salkovskis. "It's important not to restrict your movements and daily activities."

* Doing breathing exercises every day will help to prevent panic attacks and relieve them when they are happening.
* [Regular exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness/Pages/Fitnesshome.aspx), especially aerobic exercise, will help you to manage stress levels, release tension, improve your mood and boost confidence.
* Eat regular meals to stabilise your blood sugar levels.
* Avoid caffeine, [alcohol](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx) and [smoking](https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/Pages/stopsmokingnewhome.aspx) – these can make panic attacks worse.
* Panic support groups like [No Panic](http://www.nopanic.org.uk/) have useful advice about how you can effectively manage your attacks. Knowing that other people are experiencing the same feelings can be reassuring.
* [Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx) can identify and change the negative thought patterns that are feeding your panic attacks.

**Is it panic disorder?**

If you feel constantly stressed and anxious, particularly about when your next panic attack may be, you may have [panic disorder](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/panic-disorder/Pages/Introduction.aspx).

People with panic disorder may avoid situations that might cause a panic attack. They may also [fear and avoid public spaces (agoraphobia)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Agoraphobia/Pages/Introduction.aspx).

"There's no quick fix, but if your attacks are happening time after time, seek medical help," says Professor Salkovskis.

**Ten ways to fight your fears:**

**Whatever it is that scares you, here are 10 ways to help you cope with your day-to-day fears and anxieties.**

These tips are for people who are coping with everyday fears. If you have been diagnosed with an anxiety-related condition, see our page on [generalised anxiety disorder](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety/pages/introduction.aspx).

You may also be interested in our selection of [mental health apps and tools](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/?category=Mental%20Health) for issues like fear in the Digital Apps Library.

## 1. Take time out

It's impossible to think clearly when you're flooded with fear or anxiety. The first thing to do is take time out so you can physically calm down.

Distract yourself from the worry for 15 minutes by walking around the block, making a cup of tea or having a bath.

## 2. Breathe through panic

If you start to get a faster heartbeat or sweating palms, the best thing is not to fight it.

Stay where you are and simply feel the panic without trying to distract yourself. Place the palm of your hand on your stomach and breathe slowly and deeply.

The goal is to help the mind get used to coping with panic, which takes the fear of fear away.

Try this [breathing technique for stress](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/ways-relieve-stress.aspx).

## 3. Face your fears

Avoiding fears only makes them scarier. Whatever your fear, if you face it, it should start to fade. If you panic one day getting into a lift, for example, it's best to get back into a lift the next day.

## 4. Imagine the worst

Try imagining the worst thing that can happen – perhaps it's panicking and having a heart attack. Then try to think yourself into having a heart attack. It's just not possible. The fear will run away the more you chase it.

## 5. Look at the evidence

It sometimes helps to challenge fearful thoughts. For example, if you're scared of getting trapped in a lift and suffocating, ask yourself if you have ever heard of this happening to someone. Ask yourself what you would say to a friend who had a similar fear.

## 6. Don't try to be perfect

Life is full of stresses, yet many of us feel that our lives must be perfect. Bad days and setbacks will always happen, and it's important to remember that life is messy.

## 7. Visualise a happy place

Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine a place of safety and calm. It could be a picture of you walking on a beautiful beach, or snuggled up in bed with the cat next to you, or a happy memory from childhood. Let the positive feelings soothe you until you feel more relaxed.

## 8. Talk about it

Sharing fears takes away a lot of their scariness. If you can't talk to a partner, friend or family member, call a helpline such as the Samaritans (116 123, open 24 hours a day).

If your fears aren't going away, you can ask your GP for help. GPs can refer people for counselling, psychotherapy or help through an online mental health service, such as [FearFighter](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/fearfighter/).

## 9. Go back to basics

Lots of people turn to alcohol or drugs to self-treat anxiety, but this will only make matters worse. Simple, everyday things like a good night's sleep, a wholesome meal and a walk are often the best cures for anxiety.

## 10. Reward yourself

Finally, give yourself a treat. When you've made that call you've been dreading, for example, reinforce your success by treating yourself to a massage, a country walk, a meal out, a book, a DVD, or whatever little gift makes you happy.

**How to help some with depression:**

**Feeling down or depressed from time to time is normal. But if these feelings last two weeks or more, or start to affect everyday life, this can be a sign of depression.**

Depression can develop slowly. Someone who is depressed doesn't always realise or acknowledge that they're not feeling or behaving as they usually do.

Often it's a partner, family member or carer who first realises that help is needed. They may encourage their friend or relative to see their GP, or find some other source of support.

## Signs that someone may be depressed

Depression has lots of possible symptoms. You may notice that someone:

* has lost interest in doing things they normally enjoy
* seems to be feeling down or hopeless
* has slower speech and movements or is more fidgety and restless than usual
* feels tired or doesn’t have much energy
* is overeating or has lost their appetite
* is sleeping more than usual or isn’t able to sleep
* has trouble concentrating on everyday things, such as watching the television or reading the paper

See some more [symptoms of depression](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/depression/pages/symptoms.aspx).

### **Signs of depression in older people**

The charity [Age UK](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/) says that signs of depression in older people can include:

* empty fridges and cupboards (which suggest a poor diet)
* neglected appearance
* poor hygiene
* someone showing little joy in receiving visitors

## Tips to help someone who seems down

[Depression Alliance](http://www.depressionalliance.org/), a charity that provides support for people affected by depression, gives the following advice to friends, family and carers:

* Let them know you care and are there to listen.
* Accept them as they are, without judging them.
* Gently encourage them to help themselves – for example, by staying [physically active](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Exercise-for-depression.aspx), eating a [balanced diet](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/healthy-diet-depression-OLD.aspx) and doing things they enjoy.
* Get information about the services available to them, such as [psychological therapy services](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-%28IAPT%29/LocationSearch/10008) or [depression support groups](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Depression-help-groups.aspx) in their area.
* Stay in touch with them by messaging, texting, phoning or meeting for coffee. People who are depressed can become isolated and may find it difficult to leave their home.
* Try to be patient.
* Take care of yourself.

## When to get help urgently

If the person you're worried about expresses suicidal feelings, you or they should contact a GP or NHS 111. You can also contact [Samaritans](http://www.samaritans.org.uk/) on 116 123 for confidential, 24-hour support.

Hear how friends and family helped other people with depression on [healthtalk.org](http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/mental-health/depression/friends-and-family).

# **Financial problems and relationships:**



**Redundancy, debt and money worries can all put pressure on your relationship with your partner. Denise Knowles, a relationship counsellor at Relate, offers advice on how to ease the strain.**

If you're made redundant, loss of income is the most obvious difficulty, but being without a job can also affect your self-esteem and self-confidence.

For some couples, existing problems are made worse because of the additional pressure they're feeling. For others, coping with a new situation can lead to tension.

Denise says financial difficulties can make people blame each other for their situation. She says, for example: "A wife may tell her husband he has no right to go out drinking with his mates if it means their child has to go without a new pair of shoes."

For some couples, having less money means that they can no longer deal with problems the way they used to.

"It may be that in the past they bought their way out of a problem with a holiday or a present. If that money's not available, they have to develop new ways of coping," says Denise.

Any stressful situation can also have an impact on your sex life: "A lot of people avoid intimacy when they feel under pressure."

## How to ease the strain money puts on your relationship

There are many things you can do to improve your relationship, and lots of places you can go to for help and support.

### **Getting financial advice can ease your worries**

Deal with the practical side first. Talk to your mortgage lender and bank if you're concerned about meeting payments or going over your overdraft limit.

Get advice on paying off your debts, find out what benefits you may be entitled to, and work out a plan to search for jobs.

"People who've never been in this situation before may feel embarrassed," says Denise.

"Don't be. The people who work as advisers are there to help. If you don't want to talk about your problems in person, use telephone helplines and look at the information that's available on the internet."

There are many organisations that can help. The [Citizens Advice website](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index.htm) has information on benefits, how to deal with debt, what you're entitled to if you're made redundant, and who to turn to if you lose your home.

Other useful organisations offering advice on debt include:

* [Money Advice Service](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/where-to-go-to-get-free-debt-advice) – phone 0300 500 5000
* [National Debtline](https://www.nationaldebtline.org/) – phone 0808 808 4000
* [StepChange Debt Charity](http://www.cccs.co.uk/?gclid=CO-Guv7b9qgCFUEa4Qod3EkaSA) – phone 0800 138 1111

### **Be open with each other about money**

Talk to your partner about your worries. Excluding them can cause resentment. Discuss the issues and try to work out a way you can deal with them together.

For example, you may need to see a financial adviser together, or agree on a budget for your weekly spending.

It's also useful to talk to friends. "Men are more likely to keep problems to themselves and become isolated," says Denise.

"Women are more likely to unburden themselves to girlfriends. Although talking to friends won't fix the problem, it will help you feel a bit better because you're not bottling it all up."

### **Talk about your losses**

Discuss how losing your job or having less money is affecting you as individuals and as a couple.

Look at where you spent money on having fun together and think of ways you can do things together without spending money, such as going for a walk or cooking a nice meal at home.

### **Appreciate the little things in your relationship**

Think about small gestures you can make, such as running a bath for your partner or making them a cup of tea. These little things can help you feel closer.

### **Keep kissing**

Any stressful situation can affect your sex life. "[Low self-esteem](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Dealingwithlowself-esteem.aspx) can be an issue as well," says Denise.

"Sometimes people who are made redundant feel their performance has been criticised, and this can cause problems.

"Don't stop cuddling, stroking each other and kissing each other. You can still maintain an intimate and sensual relationship."

## Further relationship help

If you don't feel you can work things out on your own, there are people who can help and support you.

Talking to a professional therapist could help – your GP can advise you on psychological therapy services in your area.

Find more information about [Relate's relationship counselling services](http://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-counselling/index.html).