

A guide to understanding the importance of Mental Health Awareness Week

Mental Health week 18th until 24th May 20 and the theme for this is **KINDNESS**

Approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. Mental Health Awareness Week aims to get people talking about their mental health and reduce the stigma that can stop people from asking for help.

With mental health issues being so widespread in the population, it is extremely important to raise awareness, support those around you that are suffering from a mental health problem, and to seek help if you feel you are suffering from any form of mental illness or mental health problem yourself.

A mental illness can feel just as bad as a physical illness, or for some, even worse. They range from common problems, such as depression and anxiety, to rarer problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental Health Awareness Weeks not only serve to heighten awareness of the issues, but give those living with Mental Illnesses the opportunity to speak out if appropriate and if they feel able to do so.

The events are there to raise general awareness and give voice to something that was always regarded as something quite shameful. People appeared to feel happier about mentioning a physical condition, but would not mention Mental Illness.

Over the years we see this changing, and note that many celebrities have begun to open up and share their stories and these insights have come from sports personalities, actors, singers, politicians and even the Royal Family have spoken out about the importance of Mental Health awareness. Hearing from so many popular people have encouraged many to speak out about their conditions

Good mental health, according to the World Health Organisation, is defined as a state of well-being where individuals are able to:

- Realise their own potential.
- Work productively.
- Cope with the normal stresses of life.
- Make a positive contribution to the community

Good mental health is also characterised by a person's ability to fulfil a number of key functions and activities, including:

- the ability to learn.
- the ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions.
- the ability to form and maintain good relationships with others.

Five Warning Signs of Mental Illness

- Long-lasting sadness or irritability.
- Extremely high and low moods.
- Excessive fear, worry, or anxiety.
- Social withdrawal.
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits.

By raising awareness, we begin to have an understanding and insight in to what it may be like to live with a mental illness. Discrimination and stigma can be reduced as people understand more.

Kindness is the theme, so let's see how many acts of kindness we can witness and deliver ourselves not just for awareness week but on-going.

If you feel you may need some support, you can also contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.