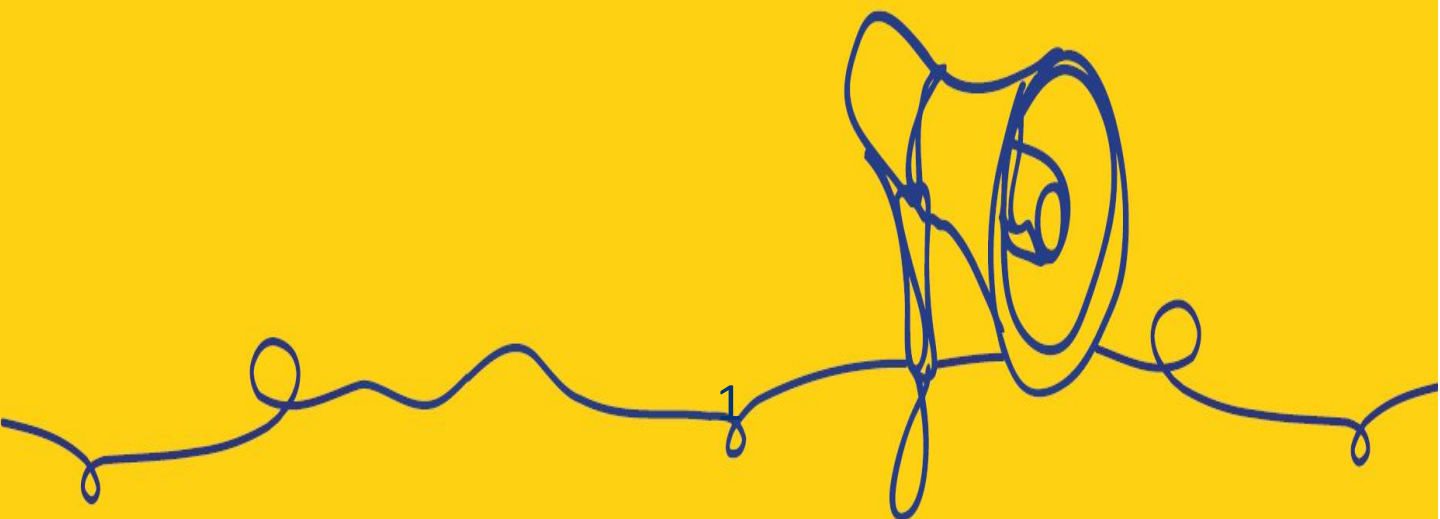




Mental Health Awareness for University Staff



What this guide will cover:

- What is mental health and wellbeing?
- Implications for students
- Signs of concern
- Talking about mental health
- Conversation framework
- Signposting and referral
- Five ways to wellbeing
- Levels of support
- Looking after yourself



What is mental health?

“Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.....Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

(WHO, 2014)

Mental ill health is: "A more than temporary state of mind that adversely affects your ability to function on a day to day basis."



What is mental wellbeing?

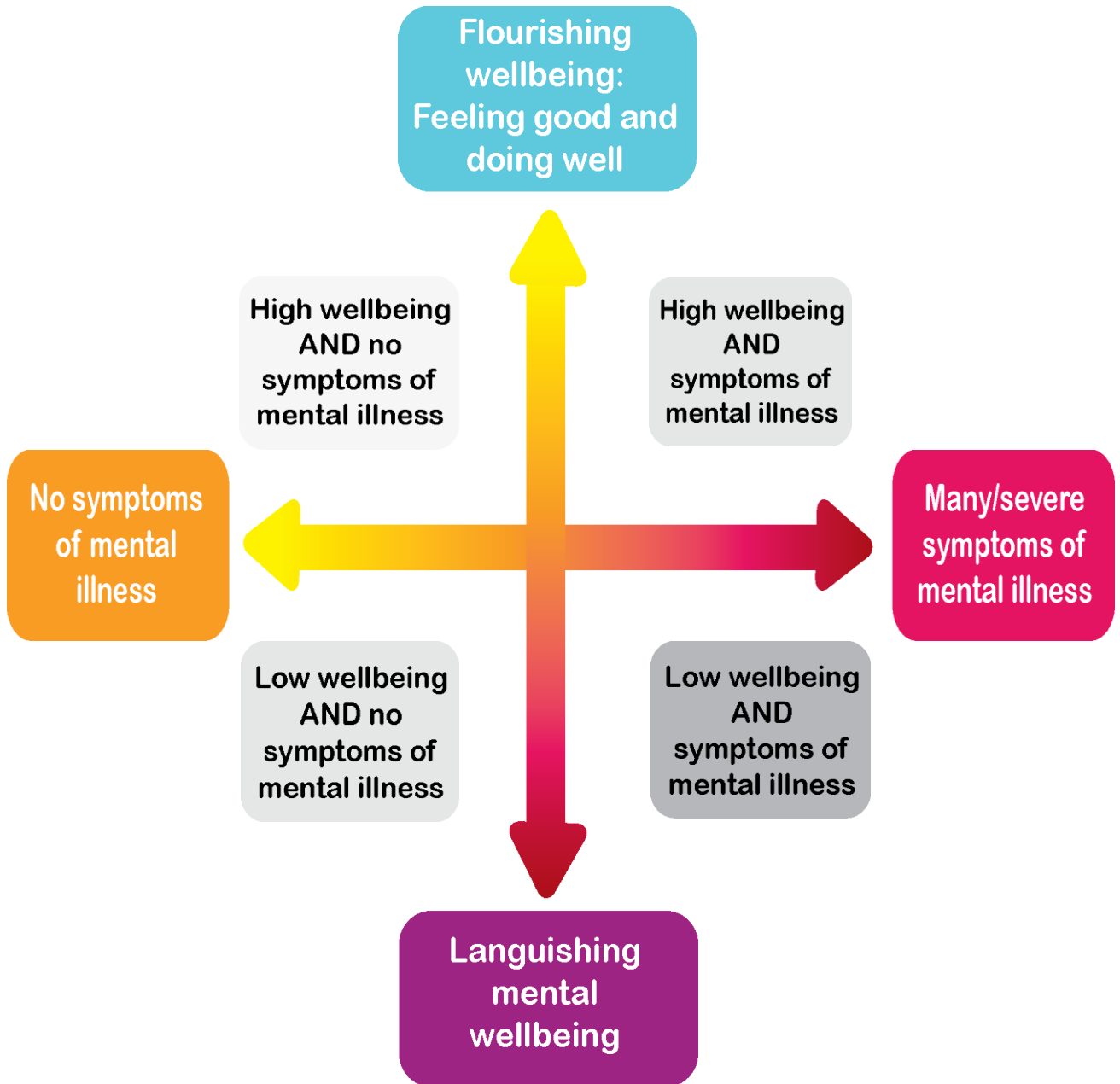
Mental wellbeing describes your mental state, how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. It is dynamic, and can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month or year to year.

If you have good mental wellbeing you can:

- feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self-esteem,
- feel and express a range of emotions, build and maintain good relationships with others, feel engaged with the world around you,
- live and work productively, cope with the stresses of daily life,
- adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty.



Mental Health and Wellbeing Spectrum



How does this relate to students?

- The 16-24 age group is particularly vulnerable to mental health difficulties, as 75% of mental health problems are established by age 25.
- New undergraduate students may experience significant life changes when starting university, which can lead to development or exacerbation of mental health problems.
- Students today are faced with many additional challenges compared with students in the past, such as the burden of high student debt.
- In addition, students beginning their university course during the Covid-19 pandemic will face further uncertainties which will have the potential to lead to poor mental health.



How can university help student mental health and wellbeing?

Although many aspects of university life can cause problems with mental health and wellbeing, there are many positive aspects:

- provides a structured and purposeful environment
- provides opportunities for academic and personal achievement leading to a fuller sense of identity and increased self-esteem
- offers the opportunity to learn to manage multiple demands and build confidence
- can reduce isolation and provide opportunities for new friendships
- provides opportunities for exercise, creativity and community involvement and contribution.

(Universities UK)



How common is mental ill health in students?

- According to the most recent data from HESA, 3.5% of all students disclose a mental health condition to their university.
- However, in an anonymous survey completed by 38,000 students in March 2019:
 - 87.7% reported struggling with feelings of anxiety
 - 50.3% reported having thoughts of self-harm
 - 33% reported feeling lonely often or all of the time
 - 33.9% had experienced a serious psychological issue for which they felt they needed professional help
 - 21.5% reported having a current mental health diagnosis:
 - 10.2% depression
 - 8.4% anxiety

(Survey reported in The Guardian,
March 2019)



Signs of concern

Personal tutors are often well placed to spot signs that all may not be well with a student's mental health or wellbeing. This may not be the case for all students, particularly for those that have not previously engaged, but for many students there may be signs that you spot that indicate they need additional support:

- Changes in mood or appearance.
- Lack of attendance.
- Non submission of assignments.
- Problems with concentration.
- Mention of increase of substance use.

In addition, signs of a potential crisis that would need onward referral to Student Services include:

- A student mentioning suicidal thoughts.
- A student mentioning an intention to harm others.
- Extreme emotional distress.



Talking about mental health

If you have concerns about a student's mental health, open up a conversation with them.

- Avoid interruptions, switch off phones, ensure colleagues cannot walk in and interrupt.
- Ask simple, open, non-judgemental questions.
- Avoid judgemental or patronising responses.
- Do not promise confidentiality but be mindful of how and when you share information.
- Show empathy and understanding.
- Listen actively and carefully.
- Respond calmly.
- Encourage the person to talk, however be prepared for (and comfortable with) some silences.
- Focus on the person and not the problem.
- Avoid making assumptions and being prescriptive.
- Be honest about what you can offer and the boundaries of your role.
- Refer appropriately.
- Do not work in isolation, let somebody know what is happening – take a safeguarding approach.



Conversation framework

- **BACKGROUND:** What's been happening since I last saw you? What is going on in your life?
- **AFFECT:** How is it affecting you? How do you feel about it?
- **TROUBLE:** What troubles you most about the situation?
- **HANDLE:** How are you handling it? What helps you to handle it?
- **EMPATHY:** That must be very difficult for you / I can see how upset you are/ I can hear how angry you are about that / Your reaction makes sense to me.
- (Stuart, M.R. & Lieberman, J.R. 'The Fifteen Minute Hour: applied Psychotherapy for the Primary Care Physician. New York: Praeger, 1993)



Signposting and referral

- As a tutor, you are not expected to have all the answers, so it is important to make the student aware of other sources of support.
- Do not promise to keep information confidential, as if a student indicates that they wish to harm themselves this should be referred to Student Services.
- Help the student to understand their different options which will help them to make their own decisions about accessing support.

Sources of support:

- Student Support
- Disability and Dyslexia Support
- Counselling and Mental Health
- GP
- Foundation Year Mentors
- Peer Supporters
- Students' Union



Five Ways to Wellbeing

Evidence suggests that there are 'five ways to wellbeing' and this is supported by the NHS and Mind. These are steps that you can take that can help to support good mental health and wellbeing.

If a student is experiencing low levels of mental wellbeing, then trying out activities linked to the five ways to wellbeing can be a good place to start.



Five Ways to Wellbeing: Guidance for students

1. Connect with other people:
 - Get to know others in your class.
 - Join a society to meet new people.
 - Use video chats to stay connected.

2. Be physically active:
 - Take a walk in your break.
 - Join a sports team or play with friends.
 - Try out yoga to relax.

3. Learn:
 - Do additional reading around your studies.
 - Take on an extra-curricular activity.
 - Read and watch the news



Five Ways to Wellbeing: Guidance for students

4. Give to others:

- Take part in volunteering projects.
- Reach out to a friend who needs support.
- Support charities in any way you can.

5. Take notice:

- Make your study space a pleasant environment.
- Go for a walk without your phone.
- Pay attention to other people.



Levels of support

Remember, in most cases you will be the first level of support but it's important for students to know that this is the first level of support and that if they are experiencing mental health difficulties, they should access appropriate health care support.

When life might be in danger:
A&E / 999

Local psychological crisis service

Samaritans (24hour) 116 123
Papyrus 0800 068 141

GP appointment or NHS 111
Local IAPT team

University Support Services

Starts with **You** having the conversation... you being there

Your own support needs

Looking after yourself

Dealing with student mental health problems can take its toll, so it's important that you look after your own wellbeing as well:

- Know what is your responsibility.
- Talk about how you feel.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Be realistic about what you can and can't do.
- Stay organised.
- Take a break and make time for yourself.
- Get enough sleep.
- Learn a relaxation technique.
- Look after your physical health.
- Say 'no' and don't feel guilty.
- Learn to let go of things that aren't your responsibility.





For general questions, contact Katy Lockett
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For urgent referrals, please contact Student
Services
student.services@keele.ac.uk
01782 734481

