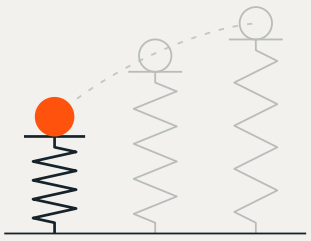
Staying Well Under *Pressure*



What helps people stay well when the pressure at work does not let up?

A practical guide.

Sharon McDonagh

November 2026

	Introduction	
Part I	Recognising the signs	
01	Burnout	physical, emotional and mental exhaustion
02	Anxiety	a natural response to stress or perceived danger
Part II	What helps	
03	How to overcome stress at work	ten strategies
04	Resilience building techniques	ten exercises
05	Redirecting negative thought patterns	your brain notices what you tell it to look for
06	Workplace well-being	how to support a struggling colleague
	Where to find help	services in the United Kingdom

Introduction

I work as a counsellor, and my core training is in person-centred counselling. I am registered with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). In my practice, Changing Tides, I work with people facing anxiety, low self-esteem, grief and loss, and much more besides. What I try to offer each of them is a warm, genuine and non-judgemental space, where they feel safe to explore whatever is on their mind and to find their own way forward.

I first wrote these pieces for consultants: people who work long hours to tight deadlines, carry high client expectations, and often travel for work. That is why some of them speak to consultants directly. But the pressures they describe are not unique to consulting. Anyone whose work keeps the pressure on, and anyone who works alongside them, will recognise a good deal of it.

The question behind this book is a practical one: **what helps people stay well when the pressure at work does not let up?**

How this book is organised

The first part is about recognising the signs: how burnout and anxiety tend to build, and what to look out for before they take hold. The second part is about what helps: practical ways to manage stress, build resilience and redirect unhelpful thoughts, and how to support a colleague who is struggling. The last chapter, Where to find help, lists services in the United Kingdom that offer support, from a listening ear to urgent help.

The pieces can be read in any order. Different approaches work for different people, so take what helps you and leave the rest. None of this replaces professional support.

If you are struggling now, please talk to someone. In the United Kingdom, Samaritans answer the phone free on 116 123, at any time.

I

Recognising the signs

Burnout and anxiety rarely arrive all at once. Knowing what they look like, in yourself and in the people around you, makes it easier to act early.

01

Burnout

physical, emotional and mental exhaustion

Being aware of the physical, emotional, and behavioural signs of burnout can help prevent it from escalating.

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress. Burnout is often related to work. It occurs when a person feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. Over time, this stress can lead to a reduction in productivity and energy, making the person feel increasingly helpless, cynical, and detached. Burnout can have significant negative effects on both personal and professional well-being.

Key features of burnout

Physical exhaustion

Persistent fatigue, even after rest, is a hallmark of burnout. It can manifest as both physical and emotional exhaustion, where the person feels drained and lacks the energy to function effectively.

Symptoms include: Insomnia, frequent illness (due to a weakened immune system), and a sense of tiredness that doesn't go away.

Emotional exhaustion

Burnout leads to emotional depletion, causing a person to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and often detached from their emotions.

Symptoms include: Feeling irritable, losing the ability to empathise with others, and becoming emotionally numb.

Cynicism and detachment

People experiencing burnout often develop negative feelings about their work, co-workers, or clients. They may feel detached from their responsibilities, leading to decreased involvement or care about the quality of their work.

Symptoms include: Feeling disconnected from work, loss of interest in tasks, and negative or cynical attitudes towards colleagues or clients.

Reduced productivity and effectiveness

Burnout diminishes one's ability to be effective at work. Tasks that used to be easy may become overwhelming or seem pointless. Burnout can lead to poor job performance and reduced motivation.

Symptoms include: Difficulty concentrating, increased mistakes, procrastination, and reduced satisfaction with achievements.

Causes of burnout

Burnout is generally caused by a combination of work-related and personal factors, often involving prolonged exposure to stressful conditions. Some key causes include:

Work overload

Consistently having too much work or unrealistic deadlines can push people to work excessively long hours, leaving little time for recovery and personal life.

Lack of control

Feeling powerless in one's role or lacking control over key decisions at work (e.g., deadlines, tasks, or workflow) can contribute to burnout, as it creates a sense of helplessness.

Lack of recognition or support

When individuals feel their hard work is unappreciated or they are not receiving adequate support from managers or peers, it can lead to frustration and emotional exhaustion.

Unclear expectations

Uncertainty about one's role, responsibilities, or goals can create stress, particularly when expectations are vague or constantly changing.

Monotonous or unchallenging work

A lack of intellectual or creative stimulation can contribute to feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction, eventually leading to burnout.

Work-life imbalance

Failing to maintain a balance between personal life and work, often neglecting self-care, social activities, and time for relaxation, can lead to burnout over time.

High-pressure environments

Jobs that involve high stakes, continuous deadlines, or emotional strain (such as healthcare, management consulting, or teaching) are particularly prone to creating burnout.

Phases of burnout

Burnout is often gradual and progresses in stages:

Honeymoon phase

In the early phase, individuals may feel high levels of energy and job satisfaction. However, as stress builds, this initial enthusiasm can start to wane if not managed.

Onset of stress

As work demands increase, individuals start to notice signs of stress. There may be mild physical symptoms (like headaches) and emotional symptoms (such as irritability or anxiety).

Chronic stress

Stress becomes persistent, leading to more pronounced symptoms like chronic fatigue, frustration, or a sense of being overwhelmed.

Burnout

At this stage, exhaustion and detachment become severe. The person may feel emotionally drained, cynical, and ineffective at work, with physical symptoms like frequent illness.

Habitual burnout

If left untreated, burnout can become embedded in a person's life, leading to long-term mental and physical health problems, such as depression or chronic fatigue.

Consequences of burnout

Burnout can have serious repercussions for both individuals and organisations, including:

- **Health issues:** Chronic stress from burnout can lead to conditions like heart disease, depression, anxiety, and a weakened immune system.
- **Job dissatisfaction:** Burnout can lead to job withdrawal, frequent absences, or leaving the profession altogether.
- **Strained relationships:** Emotional exhaustion and irritability can lead to conflicts with co-workers, family members, and friends.
- **Reduced creativity and performance:** Burnout stifles creativity, reducing the ability to solve problems and innovate.

Preventing and managing burnout

Recognising early signs

Being aware of the physical, emotional, and behavioural signs of burnout can help prevent it from escalating.

Work-life balance

Setting boundaries between work and personal time is essential, as are regular breaks, holidays, and time for relaxation.

Seeking support

Reaching out to friends, family, or co-workers for emotional support can ease feelings of isolation. Therapy or counselling can also provide strategies for managing stress.

Time management

Prioritising tasks, delegating when possible, and organising work to reduce stress are key strategies to prevent burnout.

Self-care

Regular exercise, proper nutrition, and good sleep habits help combat the physical and emotional effects of stress. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation or yoga, can also reduce stress levels.

Open communication

Discussing workload and stressors with supervisors or colleagues can lead to better collaboration and adjustments in work expectations.

Get support

Addressing burnout early can prevent long-term harm to mental and physical health, and fostering a culture of balance, support, and self-care is essential for maintaining well-being in high-pressure environments.

Where to find help, at the end of this book, lists services that offer support.

02

Anxiety

a natural response to stress or perceived danger

Anxiety is a complex but manageable condition that can be effectively treated with the right combination of approaches.

Anxiety is a natural emotional response to stress or perceived danger, characterised by feelings of worry, fear, or unease. It is a normal reaction to certain situations, such as preparing for a big event, facing uncertainty, or encountering a challenging situation. However, when anxiety becomes excessive, persistent, or irrational, it can interfere with daily life and mental well-being, leading to anxiety disorders.

Key features of anxiety

Emotional symptoms

- **Worry and fear:** Persistent and uncontrollable thoughts of potential danger, harm, or failure.
- **Nervousness:** A heightened sense of dread or anticipation of something going wrong.
- **Restlessness:** Feeling on edge or unable to relax.

Physical symptoms

- **Increased heart rate:** Palpitations or a racing heart due to the body's fight-or-flight response.
- **Shortness of breath:** Feeling like you can't catch your breath.
- **Muscle tension:** Tightness or discomfort in various parts of the body, such as the neck or shoulders.
- **Sweating:** Excessive sweating, often in the palms or underarms.
- **Shaking or trembling:** Especially in situations where one feels particularly anxious.
- **Insomnia:** Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, often because of racing thoughts.

Cognitive symptoms

- **Overthinking:** Obsessing over minor details or potential negative outcomes.
- **Catastrophising:** Imagining the worst possible outcomes, even in relatively low-risk situations.
- **Difficulty concentrating:** Anxiety can make it hard to focus or pay attention, as the mind is preoccupied with worry.

Behavioural symptoms

- **Avoidance:** People with anxiety often avoid situations or activities that trigger their fear or worry (e.g., public speaking, crowded places).
- **Seeking reassurance:** Continuously asking for confirmation or validation that things will be okay.
- **Compulsive behaviours:** In some cases, anxiety may lead to repeated behaviours to alleviate stress (as seen in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder).

Causes of anxiety

Anxiety can stem from various factors, including:

- **Genetics:** Family history of anxiety disorders can increase the likelihood of developing anxiety.
- **Brain chemistry:** Chemical messengers in the brain, such as serotonin, are thought to play a part, although how is not fully understood.
- **Life events:** Stressful or traumatic experiences (e.g., loss of a loved one, accidents, relationship problems) can trigger or worsen anxiety.
- **Personality:** Some people are naturally more prone to worry and stress.
- **Environmental factors:** High-pressure environments, such as work or school, can lead to increased anxiety.

Treatment for anxiety

Anxiety is highly treatable through various methods, including:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT):** A type of talking therapy that helps individuals recognise and challenge negative thought patterns.
- **Medications:** A GP will usually suggest trying a talking therapy first. If medicine is prescribed, it is usually a type of antidepressant called an SSRI.
- **Lifestyle changes:** Regular exercise, healthy eating, good sleep hygiene, and mindfulness practices (e.g., meditation, yoga) can help reduce anxiety.
- **Support systems:** Talking to friends, family, or support groups can alleviate the burden of anxiety.

Get support

Anxiety is a complex but manageable condition that can be effectively treated with the right combination of approaches.

Where to find help, at the end of this book, lists services that offer support.

II

What helps

Most of what helps is small and practical: a boundary kept, a break taken, a thought questioned, a quiet word with a colleague. Small changes, repeated, add up.

03

How to overcome stress at work

ten strategies

Instead of striving for perfection, aim for progress.

Management consulting is a demanding profession characterised by long hours, tight deadlines, complex problem-solving, and high client expectations. While these challenges are part of the job, they can lead to significant stress, which, if not managed effectively, can affect performance, well-being, and overall job satisfaction. Here are some key strategies for overcoming stress at work.

1. Set clear boundaries

Why it helps: Consulting often blurs the lines between work and personal life due to frequent travel, late-night deliverables, and client demands. Setting boundaries helps prevent work from overwhelming personal time.

How to do it:

- **Define working hours:** Even if your schedule varies, commit to stopping work at a certain time most days.
- **Manage client expectations:** Clearly communicate your availability and turnaround times to clients.
- **Say "no" when necessary:** Don't overcommit yourself. If your plate is full, prioritise the most impactful tasks and push back on non-urgent requests.

2. Prioritise time management

Why it helps: One of the biggest stressors in consulting is juggling multiple projects. Effective time management ensures you stay on top of your workload and avoid last-minute pressures.

How to do it:

- **Use a time-blocking technique:** Schedule specific blocks of time for each task or project to stay organised.
- **Tackle the most important tasks first:** Start with the highest-priority items early in the day when you have the most energy.
- **Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps:** Instead of feeling overwhelmed by large projects, break them into smaller tasks and focus on one step at a time.
- **Use productivity tools:** Apps like Trello, Slack, or Microsoft To Do can help you track tasks, deadlines, and milestones.

3. Practise mindfulness and relaxation techniques

Why it helps: Mindfulness reduces stress by helping you focus on the present moment rather than worrying about future deadlines or past mistakes. It also enhances emotional regulation in high-pressure situations.

How to do it:

- **Meditation and breathing exercises:** Practise short meditation sessions or deep-breathing exercises during the day, especially during breaks.
- **Mindful moments at work:** Take 5 minutes between meetings to breathe deeply, stretch, or simply focus on your surroundings to reset your mind.
- **Stay present in conversations:** When talking to clients or colleagues, focus solely on the conversation, reducing the mental load from multitasking.

4. Delegate and collaborate

Why it helps: Consultants often feel the need to take on everything themselves, leading to burnout. Delegating tasks and collaborating with team members helps lighten the load and fosters better outcomes.

How to do it:

- **Leverage your team's strengths:** Recognise that you don't have to be responsible for everything. Delegate tasks to team members based on their skills and expertise.
- **Ask for help:** When you feel overwhelmed, don't hesitate to reach out to colleagues or supervisors for support or advice.
- **Outsource low-priority tasks:** If there are administrative or non-essential tasks taking up your time, consider outsourcing them if possible.

5. Manage perfectionism

Why it helps: Striving for perfection is common, but it can lead to unnecessary stress and delays. Learning to balance quality with efficiency reduces the mental strain of always aiming for perfection.

How to do it:

- **Set realistic standards:** Understand that delivering high-quality work doesn't mean every detail has to be perfect.

- **Focus on the big picture:** Remember the overall goals of your project.
- **Learn from feedback:** Instead of striving for perfection, aim for progress.

6. Take breaks and prioritise self-care

Why it helps: Frequent breaks and self-care practices help refresh your mind and body, preventing burnout.

How to do it:

- **Micro-breaks:** Every 90 minutes, take a 5 to 10 minute break to stretch, walk, or disconnect from work tasks.
- **Exercise regularly:** Physical activity releases endorphins, which can counteract stress.
- **Sleep well:** Make sure to get sufficient sleep, especially during busy periods.
- **Unplug after work:** Disconnect from work emails and calls in the evening or during weekends.

7. Build a support system

Why it helps: Having people you can rely on for advice, encouragement, or just a listening ear can help alleviate stress and build resilience.

How to do it:

- **Cultivate relationships with colleagues:** Build strong relationships with your consulting team and peers.
- **Find a mentor:** A mentor within or outside your firm can offer perspective and advice.
- **Talk about stress:** Don't hesitate to discuss your stress with trusted colleagues or friends.

8. Develop emotional resilience

Why it helps: Emotional resilience allows you to adapt to stressful situations and recover quickly from setbacks, which are common in consulting.

How to do it:

- **Reframe negative thoughts:** View challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.

- **Reflect on past successes:** Remind yourself of times when you overcame similar stressful situations.
- **Manage emotional reactions:** Take a step back in high-stress situations before reacting.

9. Communicate effectively with clients

Why it helps: Clear, proactive communication with clients helps set expectations and avoid misunderstandings, reducing stress caused by misalignment or last-minute surprises.

How to do it:

- **Clarify goals and expectations early on:** Ensure alignment on project deliverables, timelines, and scope.
- **Be transparent about challenges:** If a deadline is unrealistic or an issue arises, communicate this to the client as early as possible.
- **Regular check-ins:** Schedule frequent check-ins with clients to ensure projects stay on track.

10. Practise gratitude and reflection

Why it helps: Regularly reflecting on positive outcomes, accomplishments, and personal growth can shift your mindset and reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed by stress.

How to do it:

- **Gratitude journaling:** At the end of each day, write down three things you're grateful for or proud of.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Acknowledge small victories, whether personal or professional.

Get support

By implementing these strategies, you can mitigate stress, maintain productivity, and preserve your well-being. Building resilience and prioritising mental health not only helps you succeed but also leads to more effective client relationships and long-term career sustainability.

Where to find help, at the end of this book, lists services that offer support.

04

Resilience building techniques

ten exercises

Knowing you have a plan for setbacks reduces anxiety and builds confidence in navigating uncertainties.

Given the fast-paced, high-pressure environment that management consultants often face, developing resilience is crucial to maintaining productivity, mental well-being, and effectiveness. Below are some resilience-building exercises tailored for management consultants:

1. Mindfulness practice (5 to 10 minutes daily)

Purpose: Reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance emotional regulation.

Instructions:

- Set aside 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning or end of each workday.
- Find a quiet place, sit comfortably, and close your eyes.
- Focus on your breath, inhaling deeply through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
- When your mind wanders (which it will), gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Over time, integrate this into your daily routine to build mindfulness and reduce reactive stress responses during high-pressure client situations.

2. Stress mapping

Purpose: Identify sources of stress and develop action plans to mitigate them.

Instructions:

- Divide a sheet of paper into two columns.
- In the left column, list your current stressors (e.g., tight deadlines, difficult client interactions, complex project deliverables).
- In the right column, brainstorm specific actions or mindset shifts to address each stressor (e.g., set more realistic expectations with clients, delegate tasks, prioritise based on impact).

Review this list weekly to track progress and adjust your strategies.

3. Gratitude journaling (daily or weekly)

Purpose: Shift focus from negative stressors to positive outcomes and personal strengths.

Instructions:

- At the end of each day or week, write down three things you're grateful for.
- Include professional and personal items (e.g., successful client meeting, supportive colleague, personal health).
- Reflect on how these positive elements impact your well-being and how they help balance challenges in your consulting work.

4. Micro-recovery breaks (every 90 minutes)

Purpose: Prevent burnout by incorporating quick recovery breaks into a busy day.

Instructions:

- Set a timer for every 90 minutes as a reminder to take a short break.
- Engage in an activity that allows mental and physical recovery, such as a quick walk around the office or outside, stretching exercises, or brief breathing exercises (inhale for 3 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, and repeat four times).

This allows your mind to reset and enhances focus when returning to work.

5. Cognitive reframing

Purpose: Develop resilience by changing your perspective on challenging situations.

Instructions:

- Identify a recent consulting challenge that caused significant stress (e.g., client disagreement, project setback).
- Write down your initial thoughts and emotional reactions.
- Next, challenge these thoughts by asking "What are the facts?", "What can I learn from this?" and "How can I turn this situation into an opportunity for growth or improvement?"

Practise this regularly to shift your thinking from reactive to proactive in high-stress moments.

6. Building social resilience (networking with peers)

Purpose: Strengthen emotional resilience through relationships with peers.

Instructions:

- Schedule regular check-ins with fellow consultants or trusted colleagues.
- Use this time to discuss work challenges, seek advice, and offer support.
- Sharing experiences can alleviate stress, offer new perspectives, and help you realise you're not alone in facing certain challenges.

7. Energy management (physical resilience)

Purpose: Improve physical well-being to support mental and emotional resilience.

Instructions:

- Schedule physical activity at least three times a week (e.g., gym workouts, yoga, Pilates, walking, running).
- Prioritise sleep by setting a consistent bedtime, even when working on intense projects.
- Drink water regularly and ensure balanced meals, especially when travelling or working long hours.

Physical health and energy have a direct impact on your ability to manage stress and recover from setbacks.

8. Vision and purpose reflection (quarterly exercise)

Purpose: Stay motivated and connected to your purpose, even when faced with challenges.

Instructions:

- Every quarter, take 30 minutes to reflect on your career vision and professional purpose.
- Ask yourself "Why did I become a consultant?", "What impact do I want to have on my clients and industry?" and "What progress have I made towards this vision, and what can I improve?"

Reconnect with your purpose to stay grounded and resilient when external challenges arise.

9. Anticipation and contingency planning

Purpose: Build resilience by being prepared for uncertainty.

Instructions:

- For each major project or client engagement, create a list of potential obstacles (e.g., delayed client feedback, budget issues).
- For each potential challenge, develop at least one contingency plan (e.g., proactive client communication, reallocation of resources).

Knowing you have a plan for setbacks reduces anxiety and builds confidence in navigating uncertainties.

10. Self-compassion exercises

Purpose: Build emotional resilience by being kinder to yourself in times of difficulty.

Instructions:

- When you experience failure or setbacks, write a letter to yourself as if you were comforting a friend in the same situation.
- Focus on offering understanding and encouragement instead of self-criticism.

This helps build emotional resilience by creating a more compassionate inner dialogue.

Get support

These exercises can help you navigate the high-pressure environment of your work with greater resilience, ensuring long-term success and well-being.

Where to find help, at the end of this book, lists services that offer support.

05

Redirecting negative thought patterns

your brain notices what you tell it to look for

You don't have to force yourself to be positive all the time.

The way individuals think significantly influences their emotions and actions. Ever notice how once you start thinking about something, you suddenly see it everywhere? Maybe you're considering getting a new car, and now that exact model seems to pop up constantly. Or maybe you've just learned a new word, and suddenly it's in every conversation you hear. That's not just a coincidence: it's your brain doing its thing.

A key factor in this process is the Reticular Activating System (RAS), a network of neurons in the brainstem responsible for filtering information and determining what gains attention.

How the RAS influences perception

The RAS helps you focus on what matters to you. If you're in a noisy café, it tunes out background chatter so you can concentrate on your friend's story. If you've just found out you're expecting a baby, suddenly you notice prams, baby shops and parenting advice everywhere.

But this filtering doesn't just happen with what you see. It happens with what you *think*. If you constantly tell yourself, *"I'm not good enough"* or *"I always mess things up"*, your RAS will help you find proof of that. On the flip side, if you start focusing on your wins, big or small, it'll make sure you notice those too.

Shifting your focus (without faking positivity)

It's not as simple as just "thinking positive." If it were, no one would struggle with self-doubt. The trick is to gradually shift what your brain pays attention to, one small step at a time.

A great example of this comes from Mel Robbins. She suggests a simple challenge: spend a day looking for naturally occurring heart shapes. It sounds random, but once you start looking, you'll find them in clouds, leaves, puddles, even cracks in the pavement. The point? Your brain notices what you tell it to look for.

If it works for spotting hearts, it can work for shifting your mindset too. Instead of dwelling on mistakes, try focusing on the little wins: finishing a task, making progress on something important or just getting through a tough day. Over time, this trains your brain to see possibilities instead of problems.

Practical implementation

To leverage the RAS for personal growth, you can:

- **Acknowledge progress:** Recognising completed tasks and celebrating small successes reinforces a sense of capability.
- **Challenge negative thoughts:** Actively disputing self-doubt helps reframe limiting beliefs.
- **Engage in targeted exercises:** Simple challenges, like the heart-spotting activity, demonstrate how focus shapes perception.
- **Shift attention to strengths:** Redirecting awareness towards abilities and past successes fosters a more constructive mindset.

You don't have to force yourself to be positive all the time. It's more about tweaking what you focus on, so your brain helps you instead of holding you back. Small changes in attention can lead to big changes in mindset, and before you know it, you can cultivate resilience, confidence, and a greater sense of achievement in both personal and professional pursuits.

06

Workplace well-being

how to support a struggling colleague

Sometimes, just feeling heard can be incredibly reassuring.

Supporting one another in the workplace is essential for fostering a healthy and productive environment. Whether a colleague is experiencing anxiety, stress, or personal struggles, small gestures of care and understanding can make a significant difference.

If you're concerned about a member of your team

Reach out

If you notice a colleague is struggling, take the initiative to check in with them. Find a suitable time and a private space to have an open conversation, free from interruptions. A simple "I've noticed you don't seem yourself lately. Do you want to talk?" can help them feel seen and supported.

Listen

Practise active listening by giving your full attention without judgement. Let them express their thoughts and feelings at their own pace. Avoid jumping to conclusions or offering quick fixes. Sometimes, just feeling heard can be incredibly reassuring.

Encourage

Explore available support options together. This may include workplace resources (see Where to find help, at the end of this book), speaking to their manager (if they're comfortable doing so), or seeking external support such as professional counselling (for example, Changing Tides: changingtides-therapy.co.uk). Remind them that help is available and that they are not alone.

Follow up

After your conversation, check in with them again. A follow-up chat or message lets them know you genuinely care and are there for ongoing support. It also helps maintain a supportive and trusting workplace culture.

Self-care

Supporting someone else can be emotionally taxing. It's important to set boundaries and ensure you're looking after your own well-being. Reach out for support if needed and remember that you're not responsible for solving their problems: being there for them is already a valuable contribution.

Building a culture of kindness and support

By fostering a culture of kindness, empathy, and understanding, we can create a workplace where everyone feels supported, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Where to find help

If you or someone you care about is struggling with their mental health, it's important to know that help is available. Whether you're facing anxiety, depression, or other challenges, there are many national and specialised services offering support, guidance, and a listening ear. Below is a list of trusted resources that provide everything from crisis support to ongoing mental health care. Reaching out can be the first step towards healing. You're not alone.

All the services below are in the United Kingdom. Their numbers and opening hours were checked in November 2026; each service's website has the latest. If you or someone else is in danger now, call 999 or go to A&E.

National mental health resources

NHS (National Health Service)

Website: nhs.uk/mental-health

The NHS provides a range of mental health services, including psychological therapies, crisis support, and referrals to specialists. You can access free mental health care through your GP or by self-referring to local NHS services.

Mind

Website: mind.org.uk

Infoline: 0300 123 3393

Mind offers information and support for those experiencing mental health issues, as well as guidance on available treatments and local support services.

Samaritans

Website: samaritans.org

Helpline: 116 123 (free, 24/7)

Provides emotional support to anyone in distress or struggling with suicidal thoughts. The service is confidential and available at any time.

Rethink Mental Illness

Website: rethink.org

Helpline: 0808 801 0525

Offers advice, information, and support to those experiencing mental illness and their families. They also provide resources and advocacy services.

Shout

Website: giveusashout.org

Text line: Text "SHOUT" to 85258 (24/7)

A free, confidential text messaging support service for those experiencing mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Website: thecalmzone.net

Helpline: 0800 58 58 58 (5pm to midnight, daily)

Provides support to anyone in the UK who is feeling down or in need of someone to talk to. CALM specifically works to prevent male suicide but is open to everyone.

SANE

Website: sane.org.uk

SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (4pm to 10pm, every day)

Call back: 0300 124 7900 (leave a message, and SANE calls you back)

Provides emotional support and practical help to those affected by mental illness, their families, and carers.

YoungMinds

Website: youngminds.org.uk

Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

Offers mental health support and resources for young people and their parents. Their services include a helpline for parents and resources on anxiety, depression, and other issues affecting youth.

Anxiety UK

Website: anxietyuk.org.uk

Helpline: 03444 775 774

Provides support and services for people dealing with anxiety disorders, including therapy options and resources for managing anxiety and stress.

Specialist and additional services

Mental Health Foundation

Website: mentalhealth.org.uk

Provides research, resources, and information on how to maintain mental well-being. Their website has a wealth of information on various mental health topics, from stress to depression.

Beat (Eating Disorders)

Website: beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Provides help and support for those affected by eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.

Bipolar UK

Website: bipolaruk.org

Advice line: 0333 323 3880 (leave a message for a call back)

Dedicated to helping individuals affected by bipolar disorder, with online support groups and educational materials.

No Panic

Website: nopanic.org.uk

Helpline: 0300 772 9844

Specialises in providing help for those dealing with panic attacks, OCD, phobias, and other related anxiety disorders.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Website: alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 9177 650

Offers support for individuals dealing with alcohol addiction, including group meetings and online resources.

The Mix (for under 25s)

Website: themix.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 4994 (evenings; see the website for opening times)

Provides mental health support for young people under 25, including helplines, counselling, and advice on various issues such as relationships, drugs, and mental health.

ManUp (for men)

Website: manup.how

UK-based men's mental health charity that aims to challenge the stigma surrounding male mental health. Promotes open conversations about mental health and offers support through various initiatives, including free online therapy-style sessions, online discussions, and community events.

Crisis support services

NHS 111

Phone: 111

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and need urgent support, NHS 111 can provide you with advice and direct you to appropriate services. In England and Wales, choose option 2 for mental health support.

Local crisis teams

Website: Find an urgent mental health helpline in England nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline

Contact your GP or local mental health trust for specific crisis team contact details. These teams provide immediate support and assessment for individuals in severe mental health crises.

These resources offer a wide range of support for different mental health conditions. If you're seeking help, don't hesitate to reach out to the relevant service or talk to your GP, who can guide you to the appropriate care.

What helps people stay well when the pressure at work does not let up? Six pieces by a counsellor: on recognising burnout and anxiety, on managing stress, building resilience and redirecting unhelpful thoughts, and on supporting a colleague who is struggling. The last chapter lists services in the United Kingdom that offer support.

Sharon McDonagh is a BACP-registered counsellor, trained in person-centred counselling. changingtides-therapy.co.uk

These pieces first appeared on Arpero Thrive.