

Mental Health

and even better outcomes for learners



Aaron King

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Mental Health

and even better outcomes for learners

Direction

1. Anxiety and depression
2. The brain and trauma
3. Smartphones
4. Ideas for how I can help

Why?

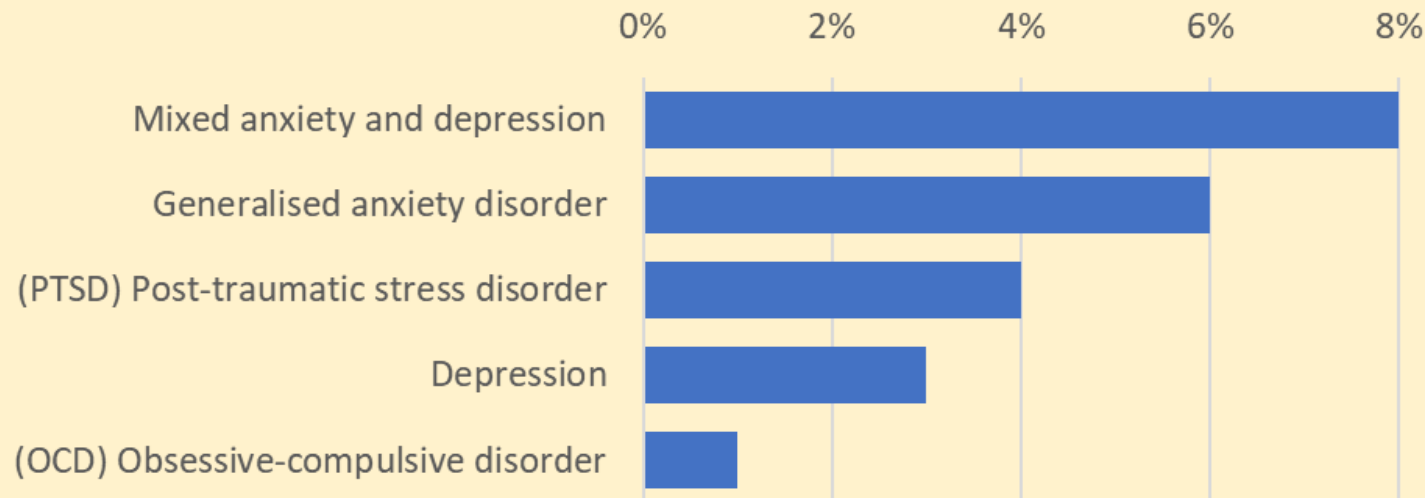
- Outcomes for the person in front of me
- Outcomes for me (e.g. job satisfaction)
- Outcomes for the organisations.
- Outcomes for society



1. Anxiety & Depression – How common?

How common are mental health difficulties?

(Mind, England, 2014)



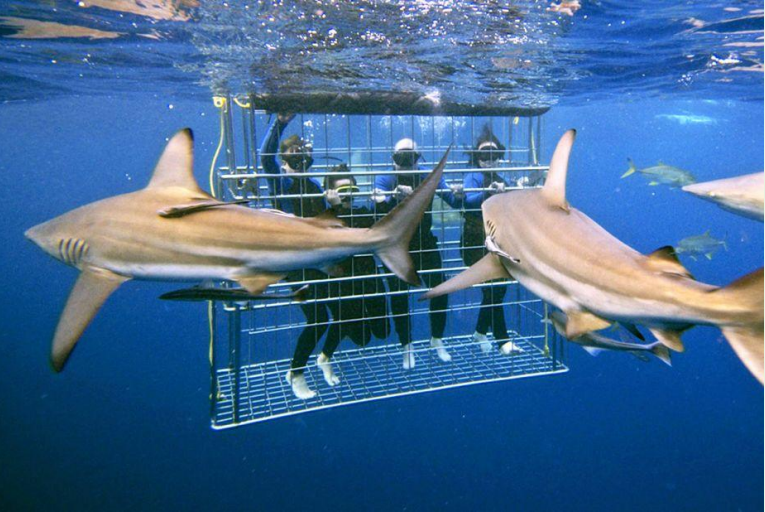
Source: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/

1 in 4
17-19 year olds



Have a probable mental disorder
(NHS Digital, 2022)

1. Anxiety



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1. Anxiety: What might make it a condition?



When feelings of anxiety are:
Are very strong



Last a long time or are regular



Are distressing or hard to control



Are disproportionate



Also:

Anxiety has symptoms, which could include panic attacks.



Anxiety gets in the way of everyday life or things you enjoy.



You avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious

1. Anxiety: What might we see?

Physical symptoms

- faster or more noticeable heartbeat
- feeling lightheaded and dizzy
- chest pains / breathlessness
- feeling hot / sweating
- shaking
- headaches
- loss of appetite

Mental symptoms

- feeling tense or nervous
- worrying about future (or past)
- being unable to relax / sleep
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling tearful
- intrusive traumatic memories
- obsessive thoughts



1. Anxiety: What might we see?

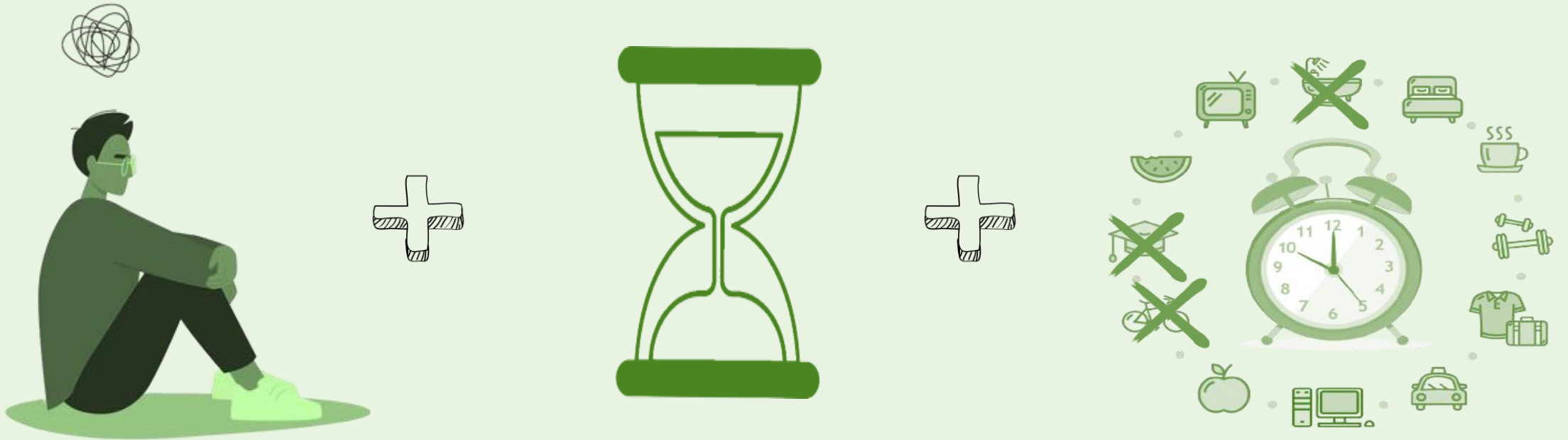
Changes in Behaviour

- not being able to enjoy your leisure time
- difficulty looking after yourself
- struggling to form or maintain relationships
- worried about trying new things
- avoiding places and situations that create anxiety
- compulsive behaviour, such as constantly checking things



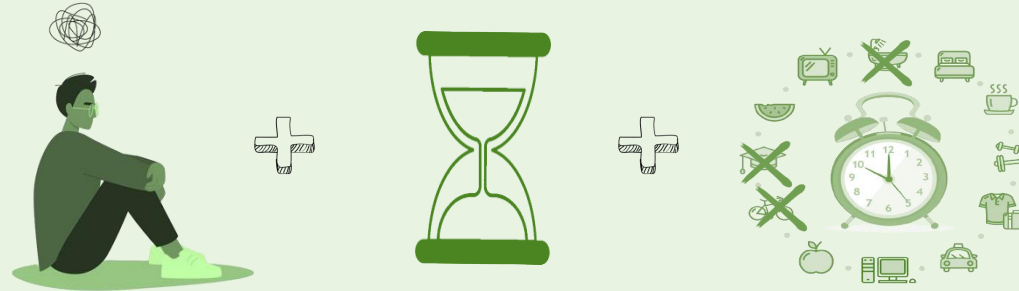
1. Depression: What is it?

It's feeling down, unhappy or hopeless for weeks and months in a way that gets in the way of daily life.

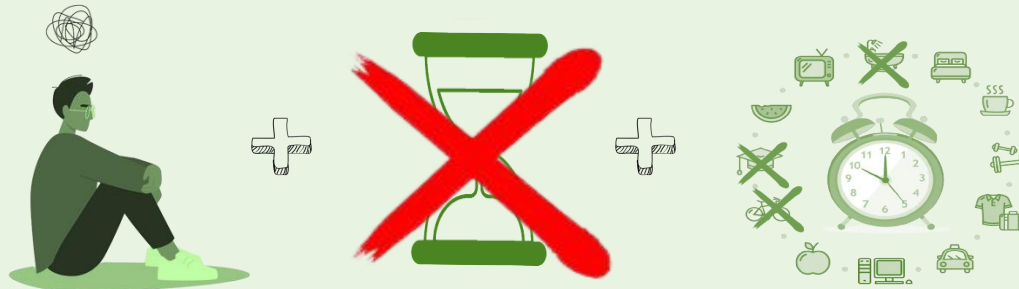


1. Depression: How's it different to low mood?

Depression:

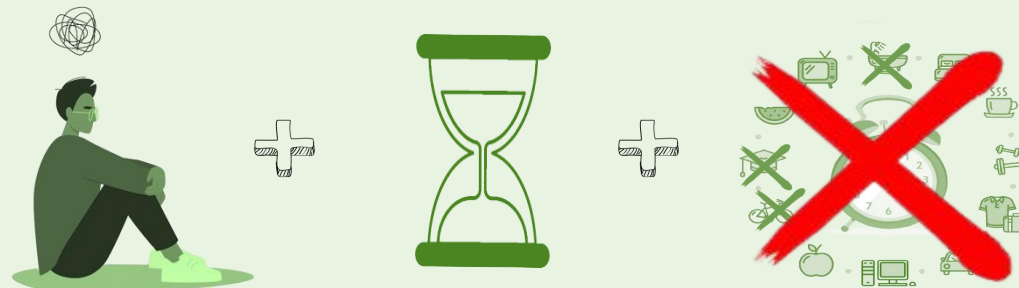


Low mood:



or

Low mood:



1. Depression: What might we see?

Physical symptoms can include:

- Lack of energy
- Moving or speaking more slowly than usual
- Low sex drive
- Disturbed sleep, e.g. difficulty falling asleep or waking up in the small hours
- Changes in appetite or weight.
- Constipation.
- Unexplained aches and pains

Mental symptoms can include:

- Feeling a range of negative emotions that can include feeling hopeless, helpless, guilt ridden, anxious, irritable or intolerant.
- Low self-esteem
- Having no motivation or interest in things
- Difficulty making decisions
- Not getting any enjoyment out of life
- Thoughts of suicide or of self harm



1. Depression: What might we see?

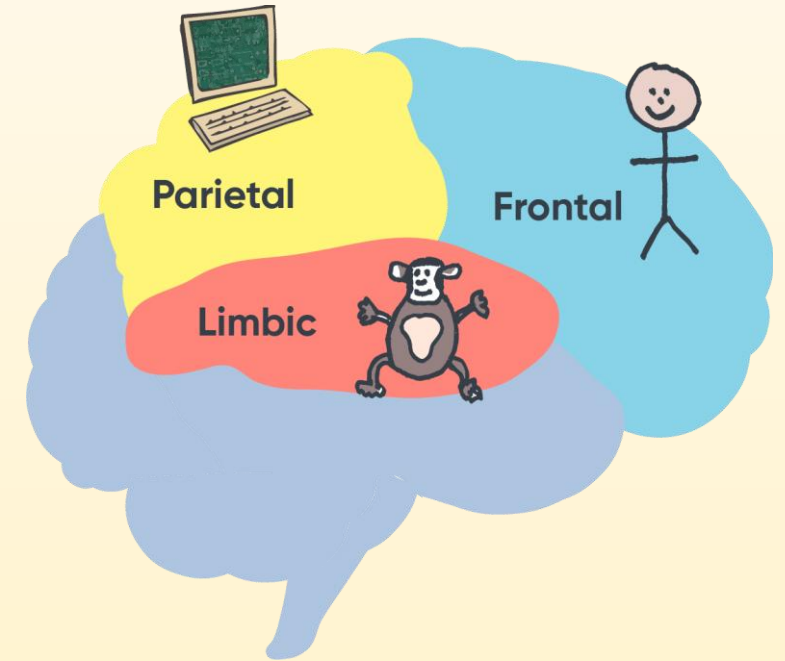
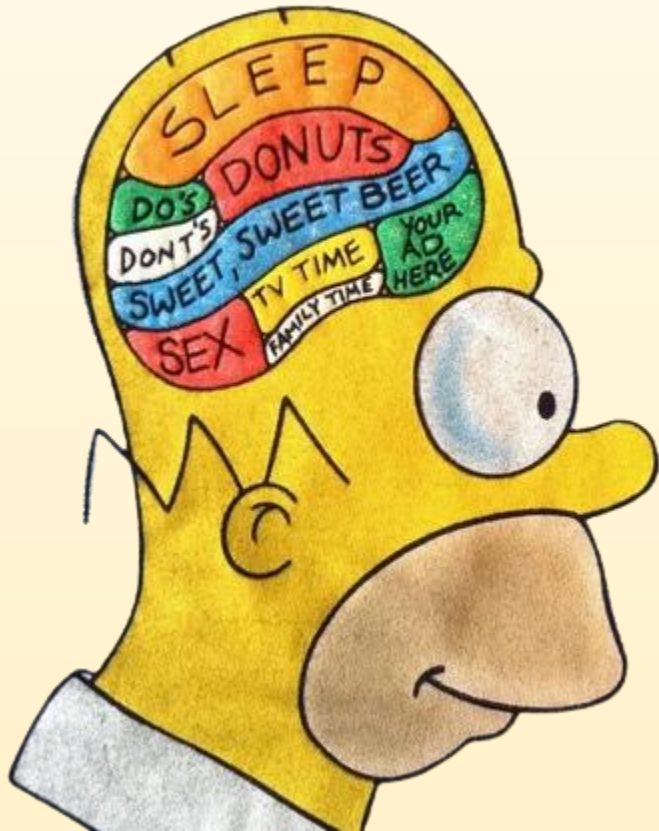
Social symptoms can include

- Avoiding contact with friends and taking part in fewer social activities
- Neglecting your hobbies and interests
- Having difficulties in your home, work or family life



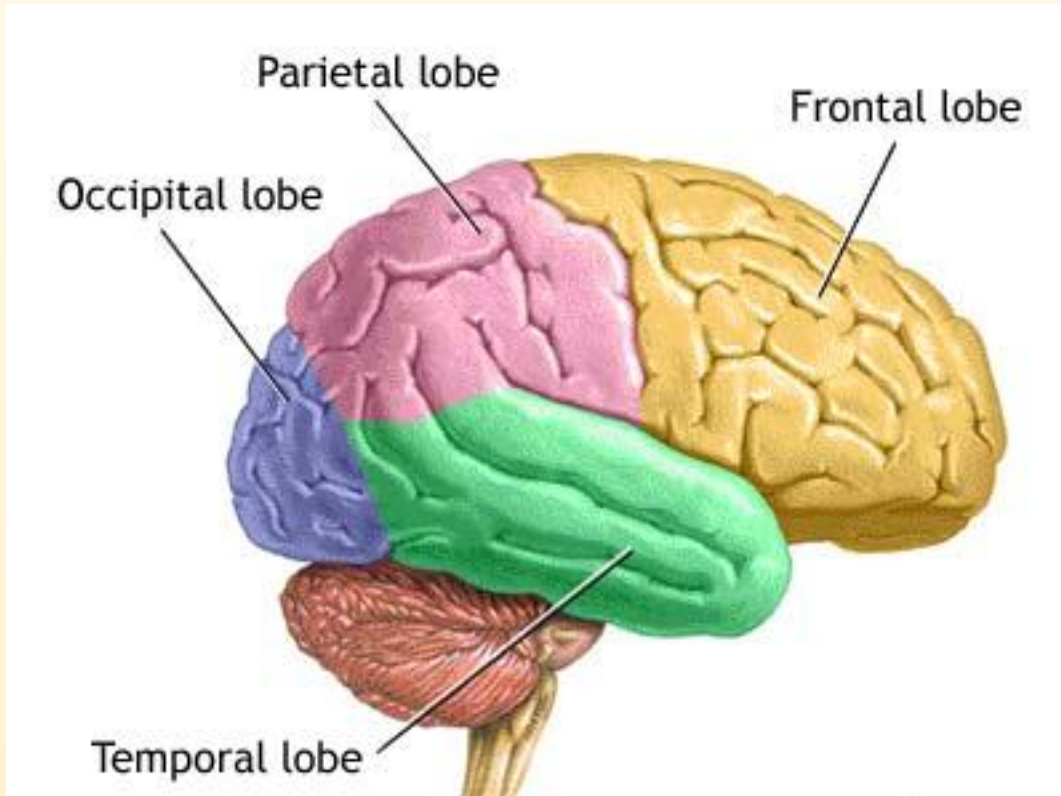
2. The Brain and Trauma

Draw and label your brain.



2. The Brain and Trauma

Draw and label your brain.



Occipital: Visual processing

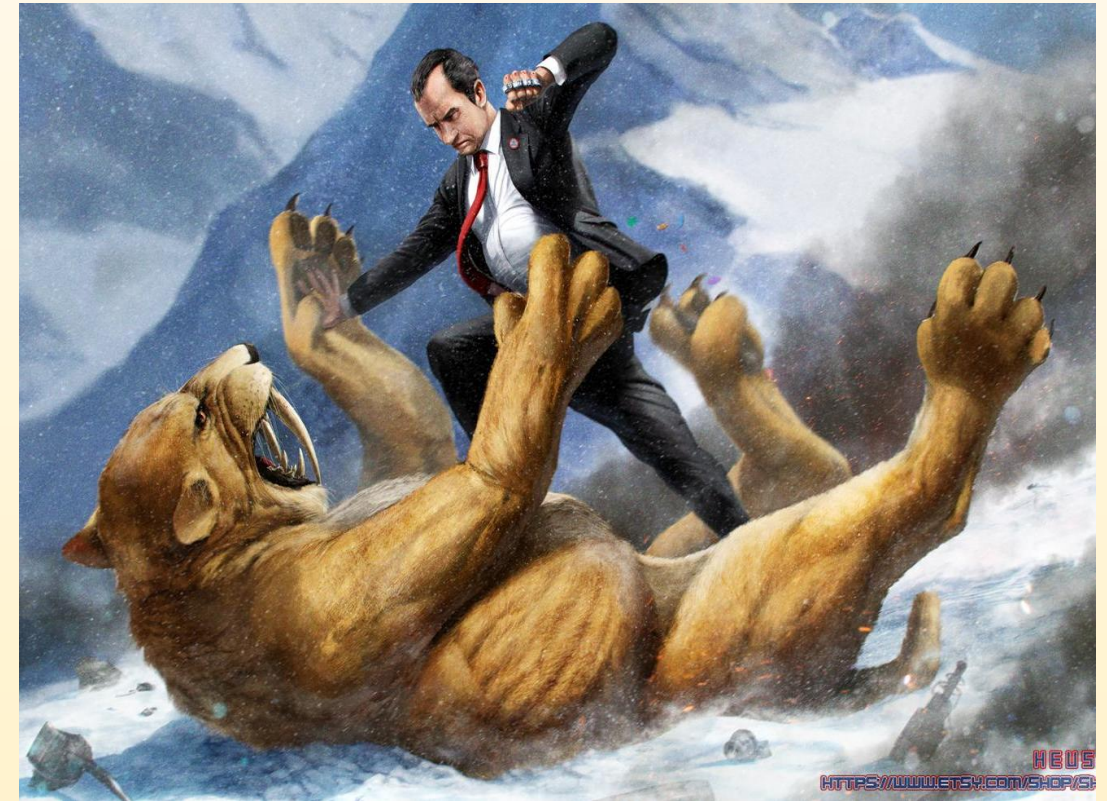
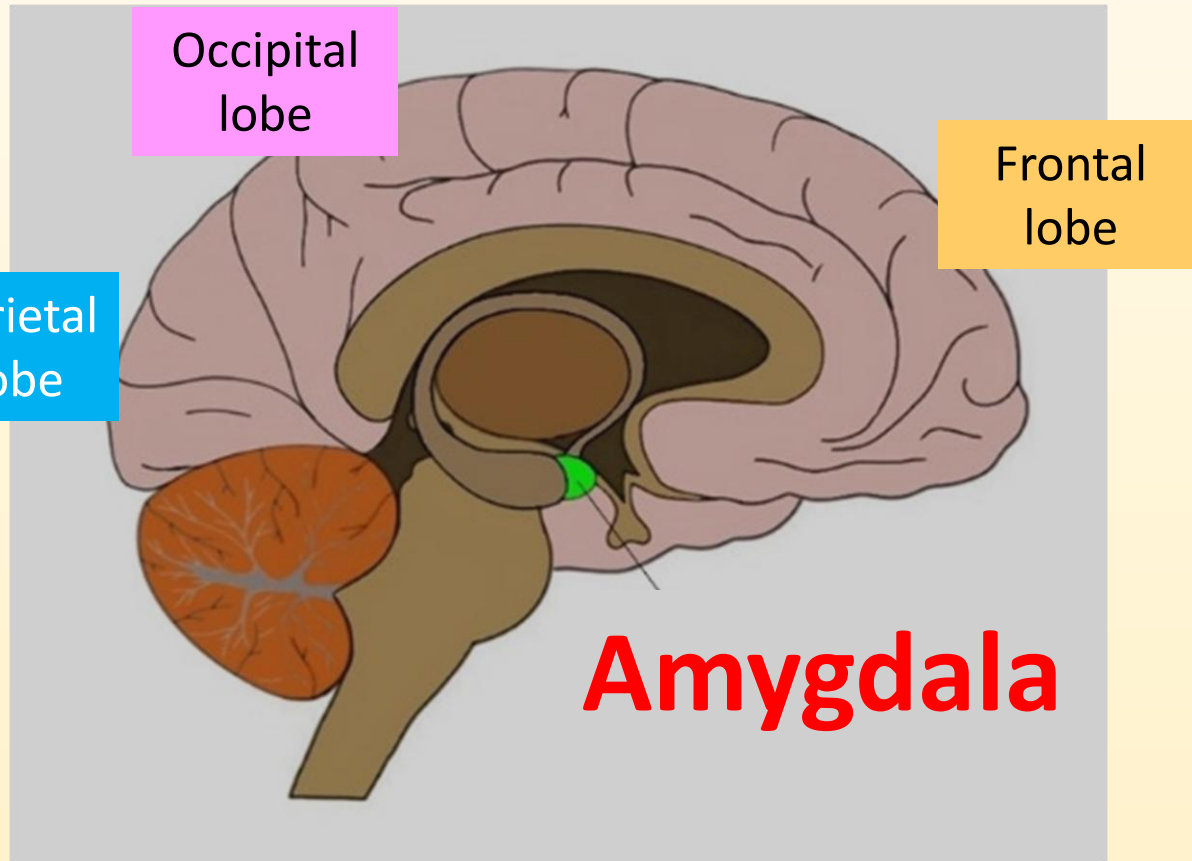
Parietal: Temperature, taste, touch, spatial awareness

Temporal: Hearing, emotion, memory, some language

Frontal: Movement, Emotion, Reasoning, Language

2. The Brain and Trauma

Draw and label your brain.

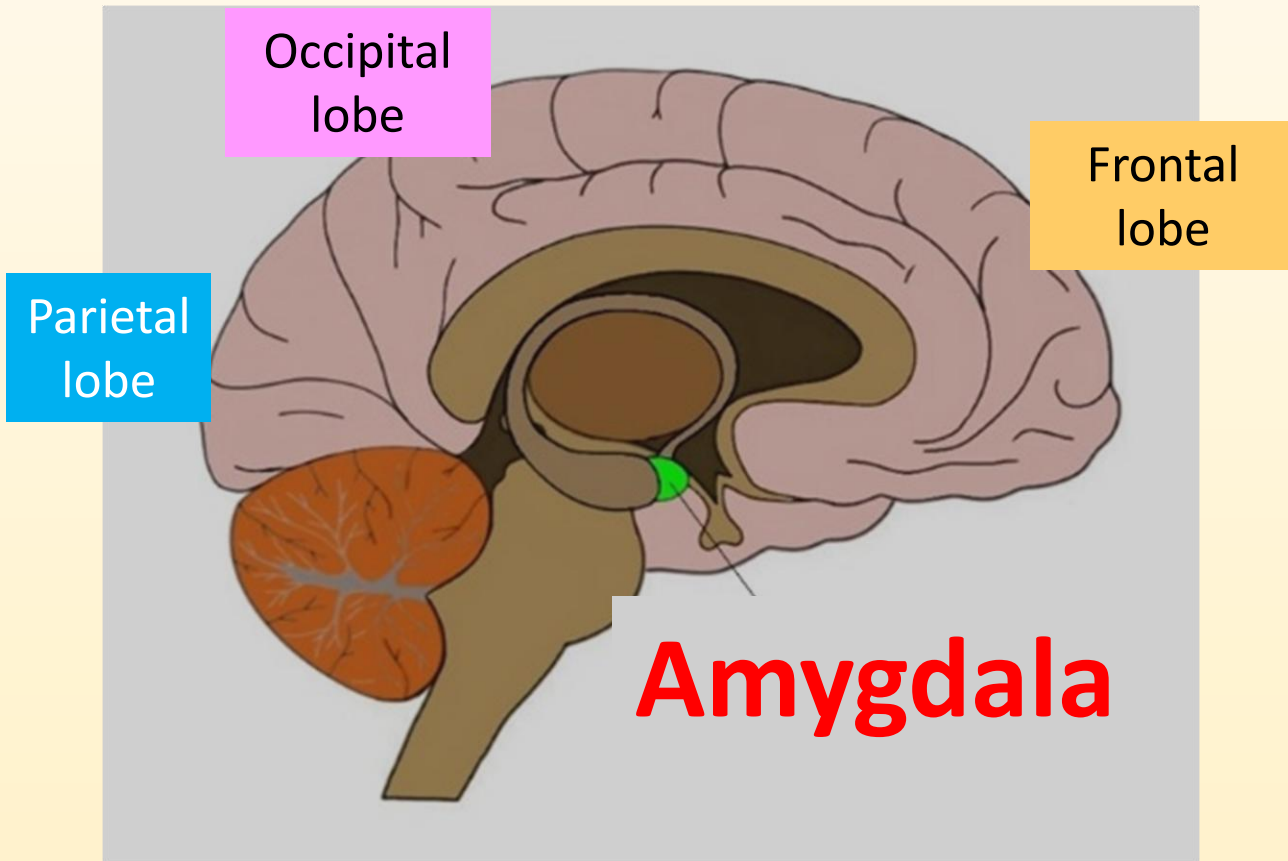


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2. The Brain and Trauma

How do we respond to threat?



Fight
Flight

Freeze
Fawn/Feign/Friend

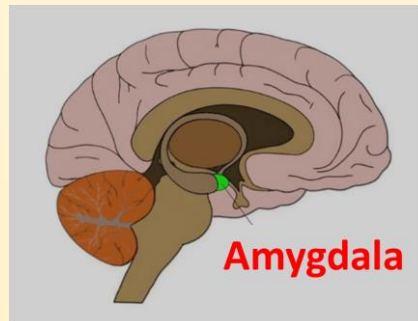
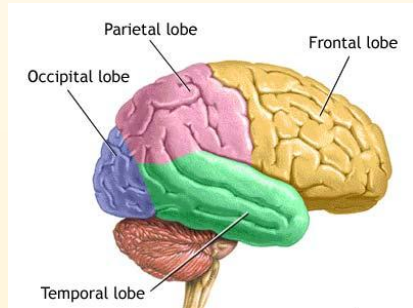
Flock
Film

Man killed by bear whilst taking selfies in Eastern India, 2018.
“The driver’s fellow passengers who watched the entire act, were busy in shooting the incident on their mobile phones instead of trying to rescue him.”



2. The Brain and Trauma

Putting it all together.



Fight
Flight

Freeze
Fawn/Feign/Friend

Flock
Film

Man killed by bear whilst taking selfies in Eastern India, 2018.
"The driver's fellow passengers who watched the entire act, were busy in shooting the incident on their mobile phones instead of trying to rescue him."

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2. The Brain and Trauma

What causes trauma?



Can include...

- Absence of control
- Risk of, witnessing or actual injury
- Fear
- Unpredictability

In general – a really stressful event or ongoing situation in someone’s life.



2. The Brain and Trauma

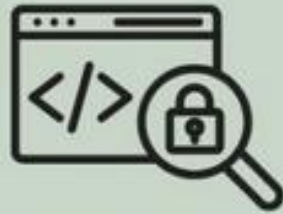
In the workplace, what examples might there be of events or ongoing situations that cause trauma?



Harassment or verbal abuse



Bullying



Job insecurity



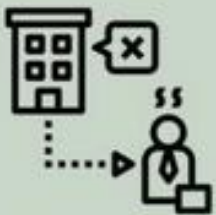
Violence or physical abuse



Accidents or injuries at work



Serious injury or death of a colleague



Being laid off



Sudden role/responsibility changes



Toxic workplace culture or working practices



Natural disaster on the job



Job roles that deal with tragedy and death

2. The Brain and Trauma

What affects the effects?

Factor	Higher impact	Lower impact
What was the nature of the incident?	Deliberate or malicious	Accidental or natural
How much support was there during the incident?	Isolated – couldn't get help	Support was available immediately or quickly.
Who is injured?	A child or vulnerable adult	A non-vulnerable adult
What were the nature of injuries	Painful, prolonged or multiple	No external injuries or injuries where they cause less pain or can't be seen.
How much responsibility did I have during the episode?	Major responsibility	A member of a team None
How close was I to the incident?	High exposure to the incident	Low exposure to the incident
Could it reoccur?	High likelihood or unknown and unpredictable	Unlikely to reoccur
How sudden was it?	Unexpected	Anticipated
How well was I supported post-incident?	Perceived poor support	Good support including debrief at time and later

Adapted from: *Responding to Trauma in Policing: a Practical Guide*
by Royal College of Policing (2020)



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2. The Brain and PTSD

What:

- Actual or threatened death
- Serious injury
- Sexual violence

To Who?

- Me
- Someone else (but I witnessed it)
- A close friend or family member
- No one I know but it was repeated or extreme (e.g. Police Officer attending a Road Traffic Accidents)



3. Smartphones

1. Do you think many adults in the UK have issues with Smartphone use?
2. If so, how do you know / what have you seen that tells you this?
3. If so, how widespread is it?
4. If so, why is this happening?
5. If so, what problems does it cause?
6. If so, what can help?



3. Smartphones

1. Do you think many adults in the UK have issues with Smartphone use?

- UK adults now spend 4.5 hours online each day.
- Nearly 80% of online time happens on mobile.
- 31% of women and 23% of men say they spend too much time on social media.

Ofcom (May 2025)

- Researchers found strong associations between problematic smartphone use and anxiety and depression.
- Raw screen time *alone* was not associated with harm. It's the *nature* of it that matters.
- Higher usage of Instagram and TikTok was linked to problematic use.
- WhatsApp and general gaming were not.

Problematic smartphone usage and anxiety and depression study (16-18 year olds), Kings College London, July 2024



3. Smartphones

If so, why is this happening?

- Infinite scroll?
- Notifications?
- Reward receptors?
- Algorithms showing content to alarm or anger?
- A/B testing at scale?
- Autoplay?
- Streaks and Gamification?
- Personalisation?
- Fear of Missing Out?
- Anything else?



3. Smartphones

If so, what problems does it cause?

Research from King's College found:

- Strong associations between problematic smartphone use and anxiety and depression.
- Raw screen time *alone* was not associated with harm. It's the *nature* of it that matters.
- Higher usage of Instagram and TikTok was linked to problematic use.
- WhatsApp and general gaming were not.

A study into problematic smartphone usage and anxiety and depression (16-18 year olds), Kings College London, July 2024

But how about...

- Inattention? Because I'm using it late at night and so am tired during the day?
- Impulsivity? E.g. grabbing junk food as I've run out of lunch break?



3. Smartphones

If so, what problems does it cause?

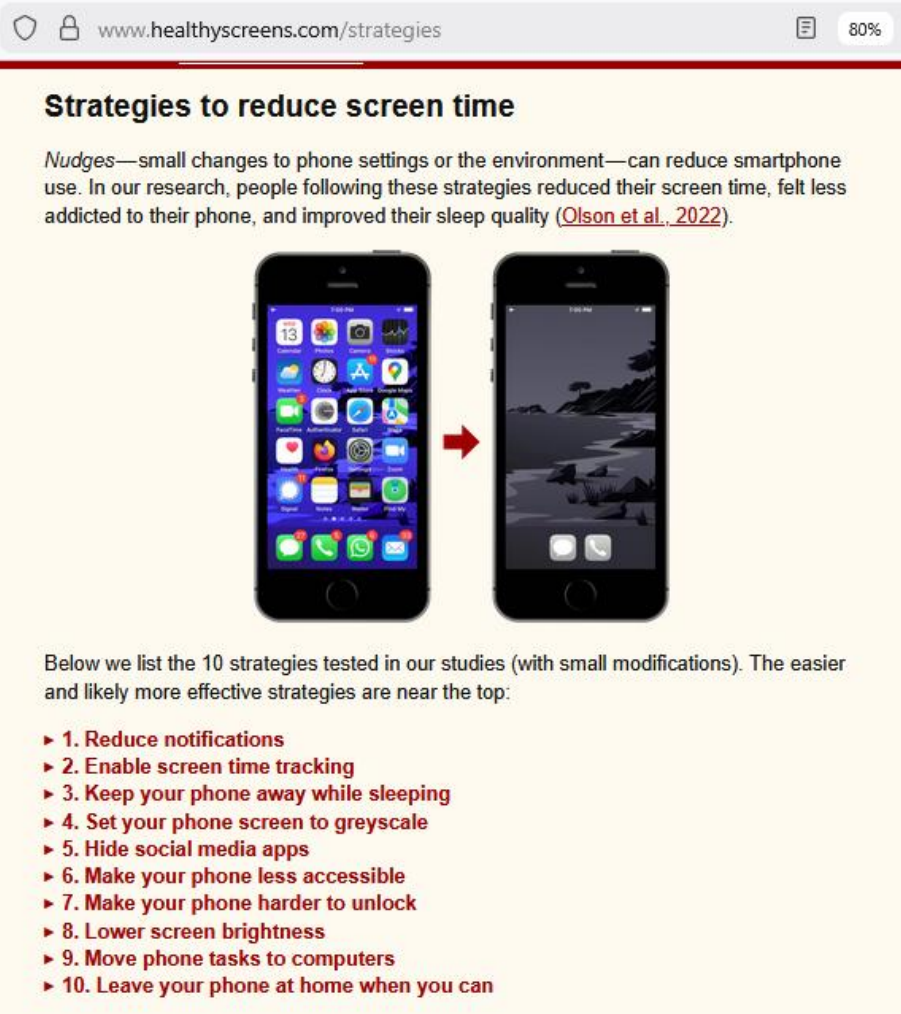
Create a little friction

- Log out of social apps during the day
- Use app timers or blockers
- Keep the phone out of reach or out of sight

Visit HealthyScreens.com

Do not rely on discipline alone


- Design your environment so focus becomes the easier choice.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.healthyscreens.com/strategies. The page title is "Strategies to reduce screen time". Below the title is a paragraph of text: "Nudges—small changes to phone settings or the environment—can reduce smartphone use. In our research, people following these strategies reduced their screen time, felt less addicted to their phone, and improved their sleep quality (Olson et al., 2022)." Below the text are two images of smartphones. The first image shows a smartphone home screen with various app icons. A red arrow points to the second image, which shows a smartphone with a dark, grayscale screen, representing a strategy to reduce screen time. Below the images is a list of 10 strategies, with the first three being the most effective and easiest.

Strategies to reduce screen time

Nudges—small changes to phone settings or the environment—can reduce smartphone use. In our research, people following these strategies reduced their screen time, felt less addicted to their phone, and improved their sleep quality (Olson et al., 2022).



Below we list the 10 strategies tested in our studies (with small modifications). The easier and likely more effective strategies are near the top:

- ▶ 1. Reduce notifications
- ▶ 2. Enable screen time tracking
- ▶ 3. Keep your phone away while sleeping
- ▶ 4. Set your phone screen to greyscale
- ▶ 5. Hide social media apps
- ▶ 6. Make your phone less accessible
- ▶ 7. Make your phone harder to unlock
- ▶ 8. Lower screen brightness
- ▶ 9. Move phone tasks to computers
- ▶ 10. Leave your phone at home when you can

4. What can we do to help?

a) Why do you suppose people don't get help with anxiety, depression or problematic smartphone use?

b) What can we do to support those experiencing these issues?

- There are people who need it more than me.
- I'm not poorly.
- I can do this myself.
- Had a knock back and don't currently have the resilience come again.
- Fall between the gaps of services
- They have been disbelieved before
- They don't know themselves that they are poorly.



4. What personal actions can I take?

Read or signpost...

The screenshot shows the NHS website. At the top is the NHS logo and a search bar. Below are navigation links: Health A-Z, Live Well, Mental health, Care and support, and Pregnancy. The breadcrumb trail is: Home > Mental health > Feelings, symptoms and behaviours > Feelings and symptoms. The main heading is "Anxiety, fear and panic". Below it is a sub-heading: "Most people feel anxious or scared sometimes, but if it's affecting your life there are things you can try that may help."

The screenshot shows the Mind.org.uk website. At the top is the Mind logo. Below are navigation links: Information and support, About us, News and campaigns, Get involved, and Workplace. The breadcrumb trail is: Home > Information and support > A-Z mental health. The main heading is "A-Z mental health". Below it is a search bar: "Search for your topic". At the bottom is a row of letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, H, I, L, M, N, O.

Psychology Today

The screenshot shows two articles from Psychology Today. The first article is titled "10 Ways to Beat the Winter Blues" under the category "DEPRESSION". The sub-heading is "Shake off the winter blues with proven strategies to increase energy and joy." It was posted on January 8, 2024, and reviewed by Michelle Quirk. The second article is titled "Your Brain Is Bad at Doing Everything Everywhere All at Once" under the category "ATTENTION". The sub-heading is "Your brain is not a web browser. Leaving all the tabs open is going to cause problems." It was written by E. Paul Zehr Ph.D. on January 12, 2024, in Black Belt Brain.

1. Chores? No Chores? That is a Question.
2. The U.K. Post Office Scandal
3. Sniffing Female Tears Reduces Male Aggression

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4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask or signpost... Recovery Colleges

● Understanding and Exploring Neurodiverse Experiences	23
● Understanding and Managing Bipolar Disorder	25
● Understanding and Managing Hearing Voices	26
● Understanding and Managing OCD	27
● Understanding and Managing PTSD	28
● Understanding and Managing Self Harm Behaviours	29
● Understanding and Responding to Crises	30
● Understanding Depression and Recovery	31

● Understanding Anger and Aggression	69
● Understanding and Managing Grief	70
● Understanding and Managing Worry	71

Looking After Your Physical Wellbeing	● Overcoming Sleep Problems	43
	● Trust Your Gut	44

These courses examples of those available from Greater Manchester Mental Health Recovery Academy

How to find my local Recovery College?

Google

- Recovery College (Name of city)
- Or
- Recovery College near (name of town)



4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... Do you know anyone who overcomes anxiety or depression?



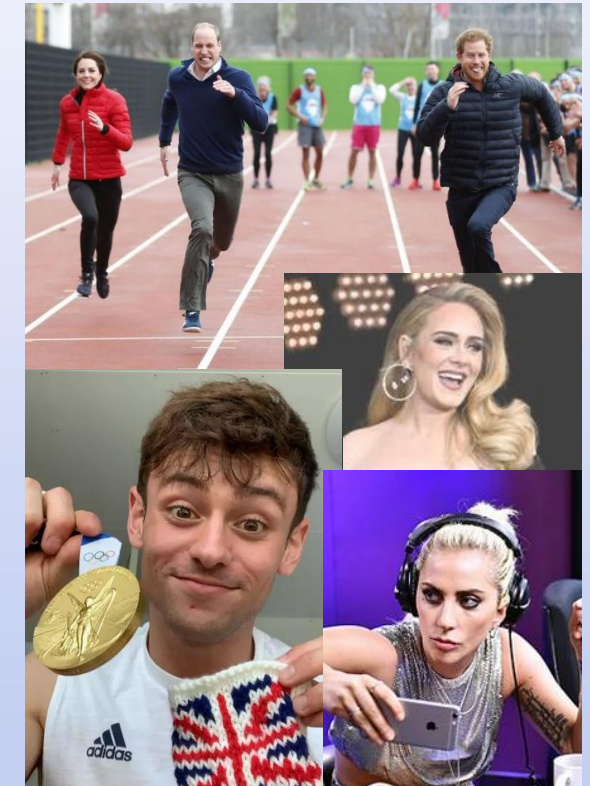
Serena Williams

"I can get overwhelmed, but I try to remind myself that there are so many worse things in the world right now..."



Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson

"With depression, one of the most important things you could realize is that you're not alone"



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4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... about seven pillars of self care and seven types of rest



Figure 4: The Seven Pillars of Self Care. International Self Care Foundation, 2018.⁵³

Get These 7 Types of Rest to Avoid Burnout

Inspired by Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith

1 Physical Rest

Lack of sleep and overtraining deplete your body's energy.

Get 2 types of physical rest:

Passive

- Sleep 7+ hrs nightly
- Take power naps (as needed)

Active

- Stretch
- Get a massage
- Use an ergonomic chair + desk



© Ben Meier

2 Mental Rest

Mental rest deficit is caused by overtaxing your thinking.

- Write down your to-dos
- Reference checklists (packing, groceries, etc.)
- Create a shutdown ritual to separate work and life
- Take a break from problem-solving
- Meditate



3 Social Rest

Evaluate your relationships.

- Spend more time with people who give you energy
- Spend less time with people who steal your energy
- If you're an introvert, block out time to be alone

4 Spiritual Rest

Be part of something bigger than yourself.

- Volunteer
- Work a job that feels purpose-driven
- Participate in faith-based activities (if aligned to your belief system)

5 Sensory Rest

The modern individual is overstimulated.

- Take a break from social media
- Turn off notifications (sounds and visual alerts)
- Limit video meetings
- Set a relaxing ambiance (soothing music, candles, etc.)

6 Emotional Rest

Emotional rest deficit occurs when you feel like you can't be authentic.

Ex: An airline attendant who must always smile, despite rude passengers.

- Spend time with people you can be authentic around
- Try speaking with a therapist to release emotional labor



7 Creative Rest

Appreciate beauty in any form, whether natural or human-created.

Natural

- Take in a sunrise or sunset
- Go for a walk in nature

Human-created

- Visit a museum or art festival
- Engage with inspiring music, books, documentaries, etc.



4. What personal actions can I take?

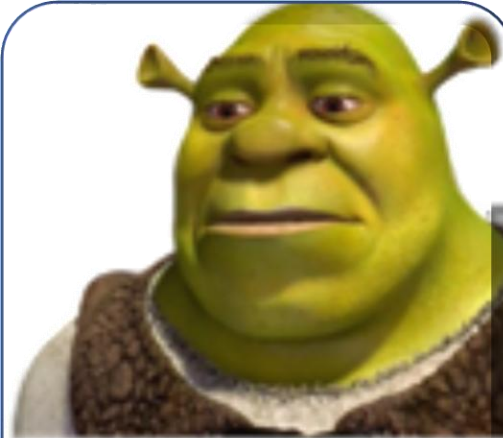
Ask... about seven pillars of self care and seven types of rest



I wanna be like you



Under the Sea



Hallelujah



4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... and ask again... “How are you feeling about task x?” and “How do you think you’re going to start tackling it?”

“It’s just a **wall** for me and I **can’t even begin**. Talking to you helped me **break it up** and get past my overwhelm.

Ask... Do you ever get task block? At work, who’s a good one to bounce ideas around with over a cuppa?



4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... Exercise is something that helps my stress levels. How about you?

“If **exercise** could be packaged in a **pill**, it would be the single most **widely prescribed** and **beneficial medicine** in the nation.”

Dr Robert Butler, National Institute on Aging & man who coined the term 'ageism' (1978)

Ask... Who do you have who'll support you with that? Partner?
Friend? Family? (Social support is really helpful)

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4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... Exercise... How long does it take to make a new habit?

21 days to make a new habit?

66 days to make a new habit?

254 days to make a new habit?

Ask... Do you know it's not that uncommon for people to slip?

What's your plan for getting back up? (Support for resilience is really helpful)



4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... Their lived experience is what's most important – so listen to understand (rather than listen to respond)

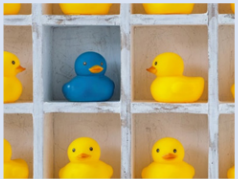
Opening up the Conversation



"You're the world's greatest expert in you and your needs. So I'm keen to listen firsthand to how it affects you from your perspective?"



"If I had a room full of people with a similar condition, they would all have a different story. So I'm very keen to hear what it's like from your point of view?"



"People have different preferences of what they like used when describing their needs, tell me what words you use?"

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LinkedIn: Aaron King



4. What personal actions can I take?

Ask... about risk and resilience... and also locus of control.

Risk, Resilience and Reassurance

Probing for risk

- Where do you seek support from?
- Where did you learn about *condition y* from?

Probing for resilience

- Has that always been that way?
- Has that changed much in the past year?
- Was there a time when it was better?

Reassurance: Play back what the apprentice has said. This helps to put them at ease, shows you're listening but also gives chance to clarify.

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Locus of Control

External Locus of Control

Internal Locus of Control



I've not been given
any training on
condition xy.

I've not yet figured out
how to best support

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4. What other things?

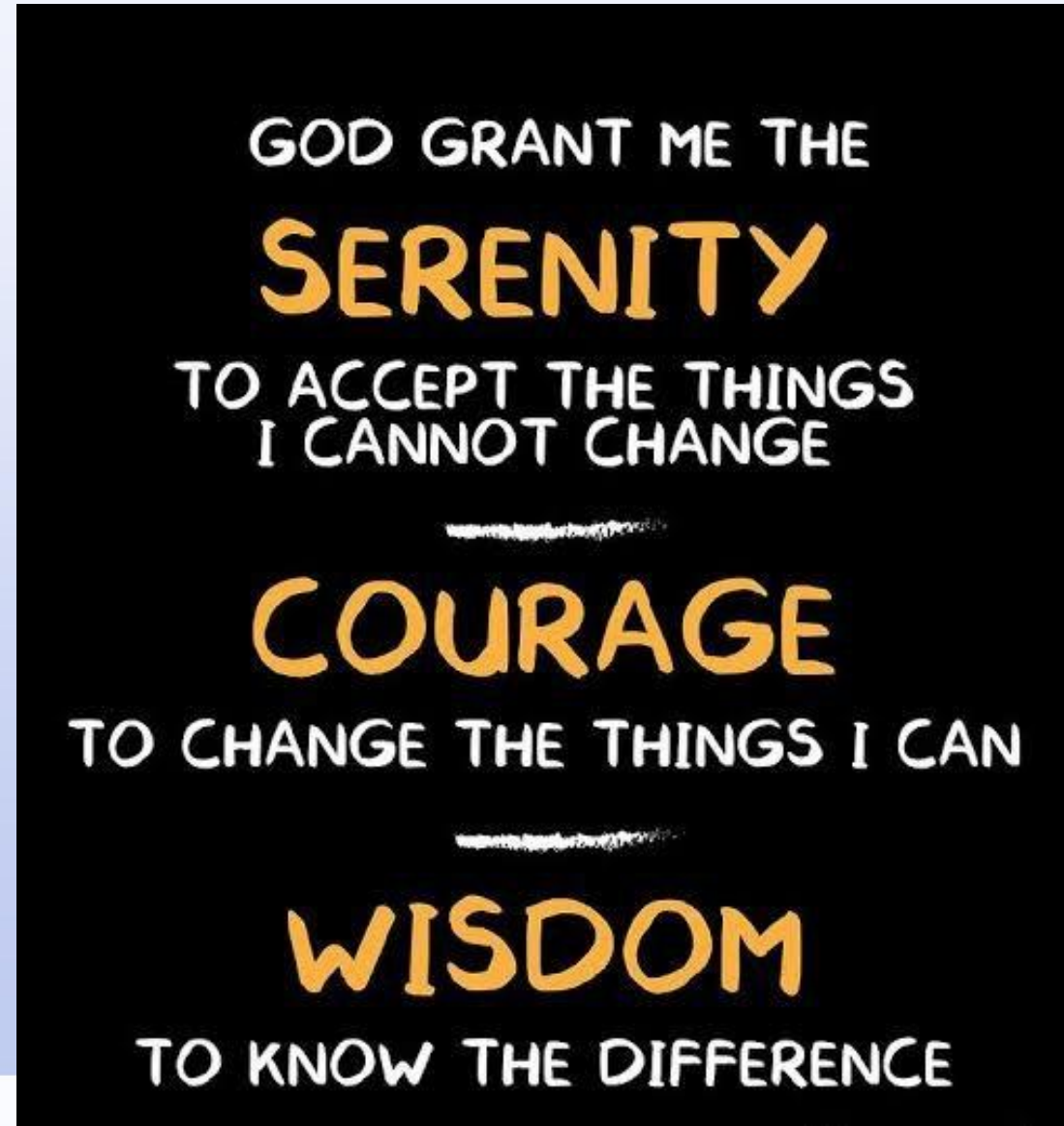
Common Mental Health Medicines

- Citalopram
- Sertraline

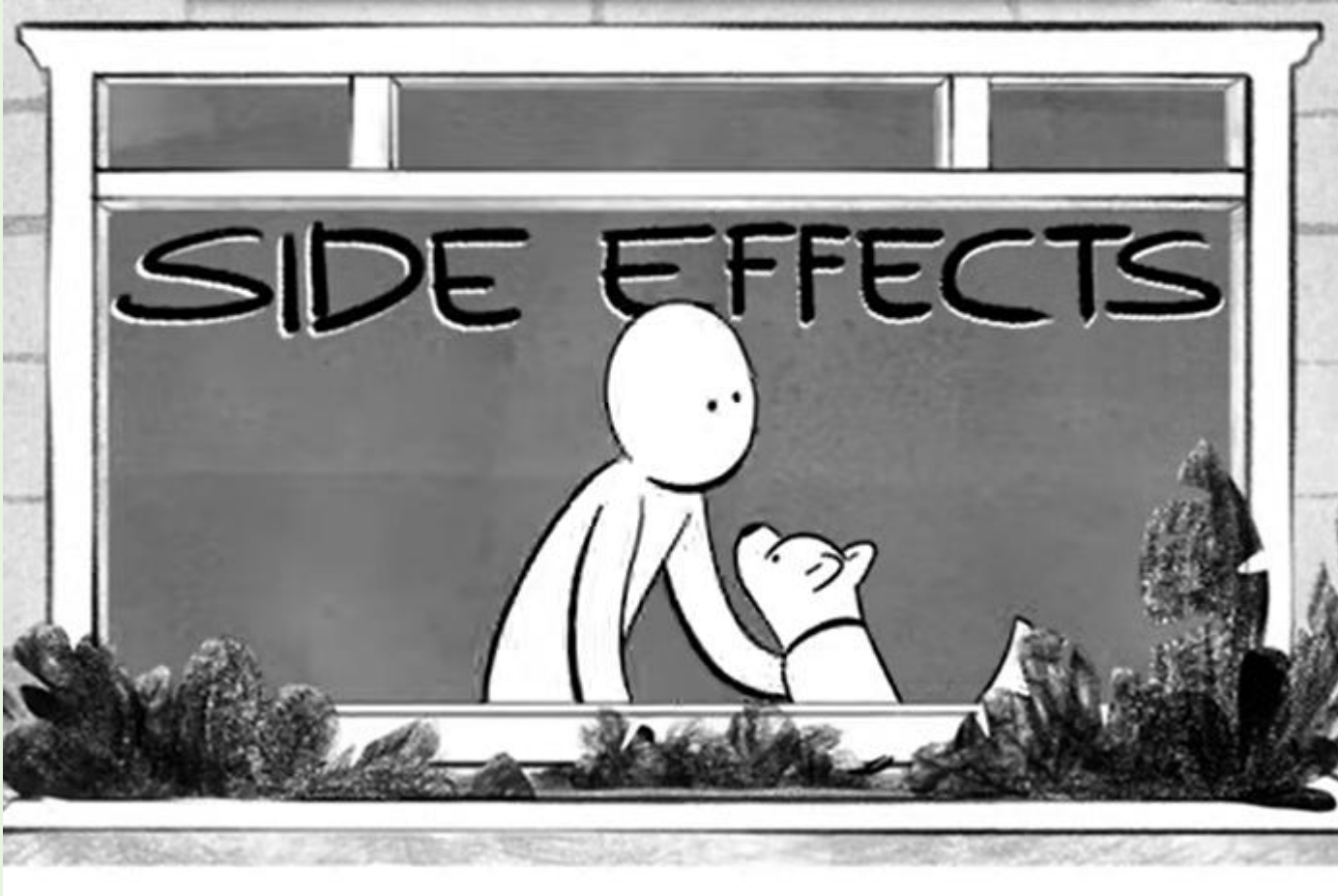
- Fluoxetine
- Propranolol

This is all GP / Doctor stuff.

The reason for including this slide is to acknowledge that for some mental health episodes, medicines are needed / help the person.



4. What other things?



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv9AMA_WFo8

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Mental Health

and even better outcomes for learners

Summary

1. Anxiety and depression
2. The brain and trauma
3. Smartphones
4. How might I can help

Why?

- Outcomes for the person in front of me
- Outcomes for me (e.g. job satisfaction)
- Outcomes for the organisations.
- Outcomes for society

