



Write Mind

5 February 2024



Time to Talk Day edition

Time to Listen

Listening tips from partners across the Bradford District Health and Care Partnership.

What is Time to Talk Day?

Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. Happening every year, it's a day for friends, families, communities, and workplaces to come together to talk, listen and change lives.

Time to Listen

Often, when someone opens up to us about their mental health, our immediate reaction is to want to fix their problems. In doing so, we underestimate the power of listening. Simply giving someone space to talk, and listening to how they're feeling, can be really helpful in itself. That's why we've collaborated mental health experts across the Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership to bring you top tips on how to listen and provide support when someone talks about their mental health.

- **Take a walk.** It can be daunting to sit down and speak to someone face to face so try to suggest taking a walk or going for a drive to have the conversation.
- **Show that you're listening.** Give the person your full attention and use body language to show that you care.
- **Validate their feelings.** Recognise and acknowledge that their feelings and emotions are important.
- **Accept uncomfortable emotions.** It's important not to label emotions as bad or good.
- **Ask what they need.** By asking the person you're listening to what they need instead of assuming, we can understand how best to support them.
- **Clarify their intentions.** When talking to someone about mental health, it's important to clarify what they are saying, especially if it's over text message.
- **Fill your own cup.** Make sure you look after your own wellbeing so you have the energy, time and distance you need to be able to help.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Wonderful entries from Mind in Bradford's creative writing group.

Don't wait!

Going back to my younger days, before the onset of my mental health problems, life kind of made sense. I did well at school and made it to university, studying to be a doctor. I was in a relationship with a great man (now my husband). I had friends and a social life, and I thought I had a good future ahead of me. I qualified as a doctor in 2003, and work took over, long hours, studying for more exams, but I had my life planned out. I got married in 2006, and thought I would gain my professional exams, then we would start a family and I would work part-time.

But then things started to go wrong. In 2008 my mental health deteriorated, at least in part due to my work. I spent two and a half years in hospital, but recovered and went back to work part-time. But I was still clinging to the future I always thought I'd have - working once again took priority, and studying for exams. And I just thought if I can achieve this, everything would fall into place. Starting a family was once again pushed back, waiting for the 'right time'. And that never came. I was on medication and advised I shouldn't become pregnant whilst taking these, and my mental health wasn't stable enough.

I became very unwell again in 2015 and spent another three years in hospital. I recovered, and following this, my priorities changed. Work was no longer the biggest priority in my life. My husband and I really wanted to start a family. Although I was still on medication, the new advice we were given was that this was not the barrier we had thought it was. And I felt happy with the idea of not returning to work (which was at least in part responsible for my mental illness) and being a stay-at-home mum. But now we worry we have left it too late. If I'd known when I was younger how unwell I would become, the impact work would have on me, and how all my future plans would turn out, I think my priorities would have been different - what would I regret most? Not passing some

exams and doing well at work, or not having children? Now, I wish I'd had children years ago and spent more quality time with my husband and family. I wish I hadn't waited for the 'perfect' time. So, my advice would be to really work out what your priorities are in life and to work towards these as soon as you can because you never know what lies ahead - don't wait!

A message to my younger self | The Forbidden Artist

It's ok to listen to your own needs regarding your health and happiness. Yes, you can make self-care a priority in your life because you're worth it and just as important as everyone else. Do all of the things that make you happy because in doing so, you're staying in touch with your true authentic self, which will make you feel whole. Stick with the light givers, the people who lift you up, the ones who stay loyal and make you laugh on a regular basis, because that way, your energy will stay light. Looking after yourself isn't selfish, it's self-preservation. And it's ok to turn your mobile phone off at 7 pm; you don't have to be permanently on call.



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Creative writing competition

Poetry from the students of Feversham Girls' Secondary Academy.

As part of Time to Talk Day, the lovely Year 9 students from Feversham Girls' Secondary Academy took on a creative writing challenge to encourage open conversations around mental health.

We'd like to say a huge congratulations to our winner Noor Fatmia Rahim, and our runner up, Hawa Alam.

It's incredible to see such writing talent as well as a clear passion for mental health awareness. Enjoy reading their poetry below.

Runner up

Finding Light by Hawa Alam

Sometimes life is hard,
It can feel like a haze,
Do not be afraid of reaching out,
Everyone has bad days.

Winner

A Hand of Hope by Noor Fatima Rahim

It was all dark
I was all alone
My life was a colourless film
Caught in an endless loop
Running all the way to the end
And back to the start
Again and again and again
Time never seems to pass by
I was lost
I was scared
As the darkness embraced me
I screamed for help
Your hand reached out to me
And my hand reached out to you
An explosion of colour fills my world
You pulled me out of the dark and into the light
You set my problems free flying away into the sunset

Meet the team

With Izzy Spilsbury, Health Engagement Officer for the Severe Mental Illness Programme.



Why did you want to work for Mind in Bradford?

After exploring other passions post university, I knew I wanted to pursue my interest in working in the mental health sphere. I was already aware of Mind and the wonderful work they do across England and Wales, and I knew that my beliefs and work ethic would fit their values and culture. I wanted to work in an area where I could really make a difference to individuals lives, and having the opportunity to take on such an integrated role undoubtedly seemed to offer this.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I very much appreciate the ability to empower my clients, alongside building strength and resilience in a community that faces so many barriers. I'm also proud to work among so many others that have at the core of their work the desire to help others and improve the lives of those living in and around Bradford.

What's your job title?

My title is Health Engagement Officer for the Severe Mental Illness Programme. I work with GPs and partnering organisations to improve the access and attendance to annual physical health checks and the subsequent physical interventions that patients are referred on to. I also work to ensure that these are suitable and tailored to individuals living with a severe mental illness.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to spend my free time either outdoors or making something. I love horse riding and walking, collecting seeds as we go for our, admittedly small, garden. In terms of making I'm a very keen cook, with a passion for the arts also. I enjoy pottery, floristry and drawing, and have recently got into rug tufting!

What's coming up at Mind in Bradford?

Bereavement and loss workshop

4.00 pm - 5.30 pm | Monday 12 February | Mind in Bradford

Trip to Yorkshire Wildlife Park

9.00 am from the Mind in Bradford | Monday 26 February | £5 contribution

*This is only available to clients who have used Mind in Bradford's Wellbeing service within the past 6 months.

Book on to any of the above by calling reception on 01274 730815 or emailing admin@mindinbradford.org.uk.