

# Myth busters – what’s the truth about mental health?

As a society we’re not very good at talking about our emotions, or how we’re feeling, and there is still stigma and discrimination out there about mental health. (If you’d like to find out more about this, have a look at the Time to Change campaign at [www.time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople).)

Mental health can be difficult to talk about or find out accurate information. In our **‘Finding out more about mental health and illness’**, you can find some sources of information and help.

Here, we look at some of the myths that are out there about mental health, and the facts behind them. These were provided by young people, and are things that they’ve heard themselves.

**MYTH:** Only certain people experience mental health problems.

**FACT:** Anyone can experience a mental health problem at any time.

**MYTH:** People experiencing mental health problems tend to be violent or dangerous.

**FACT:** This is not true; in fact people who are experiencing mental health problems are statistically more likely to be a victim of violence.

**MYTH:** Mental health problems are rare.

**FACT:** 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime.

**MYTH:** Young people do not experience mental health problems.

**FACT:** 1 in 10 young people are experiencing mental health problems at any one time. On average, that’s about 3 young people in every school classroom.

- MYTH:** Only some people have mental health.
- FACT:** Everyone has mental health, just as we all have physical health.
- MYTH:** People who experience mental health problems do not recover.
- FACT:** Lots of people do recover from mental health problems, and most people go on to live happy, fulfilling lives.
- MYTH:** There is not much support available for people experiencing mental health problems.
- FACT:** There are lots of places you can go if you are experiencing mental health problems – it's important to talk to a responsible adult who will support you.
- MYTH:** Children don't experience mental health problems until they are teenagers.
- FACT:** Whilst they're less common, younger children can have mental health problems too.
- MYTH:** Learning difficulties and mental health problems are the same.
- FACT:** Mental health problems are about thoughts and feelings, rather than the different ways someone learns.
- MYTH:** You can see if someone has a mental illness.
- FACT:** You can't tell if someone has a mental illness just by looking at them, people with a mental illness are just the same as everyone else.
- MYTH:** It is very rare for young people to self-harm.
- FACT:** Over the past 10 years, the number of young people admitted to hospital relating to self-harm has increased, but that is partly because we understand much better what it is now, and it is being recognised more easily.
- MYTH:** There is nothing we can do to maintain positive wellbeing and look after our own mental health.
- FACT:** There are lots of things we can do to look after our own mental health, just like we look after our physical health, such as going for walks, listening to music, relaxing, switching off technology, eating well and talking to others about how we're feeling.



# Activity

**Are there any other things you've heard about mental health or mental illness that you're not sure are true?**

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You could check out whether the things you've heard are correct, or email [youngpeople@rethink.org](mailto:youngpeople@rethink.org) and we will help answer the question.

## Key messages

- Have a look at our other resources for the facts about mental health and lots of information.
- Be aware there are lots of myths around about mental health and it's important to find out the truth.
- Don't assume all websites contain helpful information – be selective, and if you have any doubts, look somewhere else.
- Ask professionals lots of questions.