



Speaking with care

Worldwide, there are millions of people with a mental health condition. If someone close to you, such as a friend, family or co-worker, is managing a mental health issue, it's important to support them, if you can. One simple way you can do that is by 'speaking with care' – in other words, making sure that you choose your words carefully.

Do you feel equipped to talk to them without saying something potentially hurtful or inadvertently discouraging them from seeking the help they need? You can help increase awareness and reduce stigma by using these stigma-free ways to talk about mental health.

1. **Remove.** If you use words such as crazy, nutty, head case, lunatic, psycho, schizoid etc., you're reinforcing stereotypes and minimising the importance of understanding mental health conditions. Simply remove these words from your vocabulary. Instead, be specific.
2. **Reword.** Rephrase how you describe the situation, bearing in mind that a mental health condition does not define a person. So, for example, say: "someone who lives with a mental health condition" or "someone who is affected by a mental health condition". Don't say: "Someone who suffers from a mental health condition".
3. **Rethink.** Don't use the disease to describe the person. Instead, use a person-first approach. For example, say: "a person living with schizophrenia" or "someone diagnosed with schizophrenia". Don't say: "A schizophrenic person".

Remember – no matter how much we care for someone or how well-intentioned we might be, the words that we use matter. Here are some handy examples of using better word choices:

- Person who uses drugs – Use the term “use” or “uses”. Don’t say “abuse” or “abuses”.
- Person with alcohol use disorder – Use the term “alcohol use disorder”. Don’t say “alcoholic”.
- Person with substance use disorder – Use the term “substance use disorder”. Don’t say “drug abuser”, “drug addict” etc.
- Person in recovery – Use the term “in recovery”. Don’t say “former addict”, “former alcoholic” etc.
- Person who died by suicide – Use the term “died by suicide”. Don’t say “committed suicide”.
- When referring to any mental health condition, the terms “living with”, “diagnosed with”, “who has” etc. are preferred over the terms “suffers from” and “victim of”.

Sources:

World Health Organization: Mental disorders.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

The sandwich generation: Caring for your kids and your parents

Many parents are used to juggling their children's hectic schedules. But what happens when another ball is thrown into the mix – the responsibility of caring for ageing parents?

More and more middle-aged British people find themselves in this position. They're sandwiched between caring for their children and caring for their parents. If you're in this situation and feel stressed or overwhelmed, take heart. In fact, there is a new, commonly used term for people in this situation: 'the sandwich generation'.

Here are six ways to find balance and make the most of your time:

1. **Get organised.** Make a master calendar. Use it to keep track of your own appointments, your kids' schedules and your parents' doctor visits. Include other reminders, such as when to order more medical supplies or prescriptions. The National Caregivers Library online has many useful forms that can help you organise your family's important documents.
2. **Overcome the distance.** Living far apart makes it hard to keep tabs on ageing parents. It may be easier to relocate them closer to where you live, or even into your own home. If that's not possible, use your visits to set up a local support network that you can tap into when they need extra help. There are caregivers available who are paid to care for your parents if they don't want to relocate or you cannot accommodate their special needs. Note that these services would be paid for out of pocket, as they are not covered by most insurance companies.
3. **Stay informed about parents' health.** That will make it easier for you to make decisions and set priorities for their care. Make a point of knowing their doctors, and ask to be kept informed about their conditions – by phone, if you're not in the area. Due to new health privacy laws, you will have to get your parents' permission and sign a release of information form. These should be available at your doctor's office.
4. **Ask for help when you need it.** You don't need to do everything yourself. Ask your relatives and friends for help when you need it. Often, your loved ones want to help, but they may not know how. Start the conversation by telling them what you could use their help with.
5. **Find respite care.** Specialised adult day care centres are an option when you don't want to miss your child's football game. Many offer transportation and have skilled nursing staff to give medicines and monitor mealtimes. You could also hire a home health nurse or aide to take over your duties a few times per month.
6. **Take care of yourself.** It's important to stay in control of your own life while looking after loved ones. Eat well and exercise to stay energised and healthy. Don't neglect your own pursuits and interests, either. Do things you enjoy, and take time to relax and destress daily. Also, make time to regularly visit friends and other loved ones. Make sure that you continue to socialise with friends and don't become isolated.

Remember – as a member of the sandwich generation, you're not alone. You have a lot in common with many other caregivers your age. Don't hesitate to reach out for help when you need it.

Sources:

ARCH: National Respite Network and Resource Center. The ABCs of respite: A consumer's guide for family caregivers.
<https://archrespite.org/consumer-information>

National Institute on Aging. So far away: Twenty questions and answers about long-distance caregiving.
https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-07/L-D-Caregiving_508.pdf

Family Caregiver Alliance: The Sandwich Generation: When Caregiver Seems to Be Your Only Role.
<https://www.caregiver.org/sandwich-generation-when-caregiver-seems-be-your-only-role>

Relaxation tips

Stress is a natural part of life, and how we choose to manage it is critical to our well-being. Knowing how and when to practise relaxation can help you manage stress in a healthy way. It's especially important during stressful times to have tools that you can use to dial down stress.

Relaxation techniques are intentional practices used to produce the body's natural relaxation response. These skills slow your breathing rate, lower blood pressure, reduce headaches and insomnia, and improve overall health. These activities are tools that will improve your quality of life if you set aside time to practise them.

Stress Symptoms and Relaxation Benefits

When the stress response is constantly activated in our bodies, a number of medical issues can occur. Stress is a contributing factor to high blood pressure, irritable bowel conditions, hypertension and even strokes, so working on reducing stress is a valuable investment in your future health.

Engaging and practising your relaxation response results in limitless advantages. Some measurable benefits include better concentration, lower heart and breathing rates, and a reduction in chronic pain. You may also experience less fatigue, irritability and muscle tension.

Types of relaxation techniques

To reduce chronic stress in your life, consider incorporating one or more of these relaxation techniques into your daily routine:

- **Autogenic relaxation**– Paying attention to your body is a great way to reduce stress. People who practise this form of relaxation focus on peaceful images or words while tuning in to their breathing, heart rate and physical sensations.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**– With this technique, you slowly tense and relax individual muscles. Start with your feet and work up to your head. This practice teaches awareness of muscle tension when you are stressed.
- **Biofeedback**– There are electronic devices that you can use to measure physical responses to stress. With instant feedback, you can take notes on what exercises relax you the most.
- **Guided imagery**– Begin by replacing negative images with positive, peaceful ones. For example, you might envision a day at the beach, or relaxing in a hammock under the shade.
- **Music**– Believe it or not, listening to music can lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Focus on the music and sing out loud if possible.
- **Laughter**– Watching your favourite funny film or catching up with a witty friend can be just what the doctor ordered, so to speak. Laughter lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, and promotes brain chemicals called endorphins to lift your mood.
- **Gratitude**– There is much to say for approaching life with a positive attitude and a good perspective. Writing down things that we are grateful for or even sending a 'thank you' note to someone can help remind us of what is truly important.
- **Be present**– Focus on what's in front of you by using your senses. Practise being present in your relationships, at work and by yourself. Push aside thoughts about your to-do list, future events and things in

the past. Try keeping your thoughts on the here and now.

Relaxation techniques are most effective when they are combined with other tools for healthy living. Proper rest, a healthy diet and exercise can all contribute to reducing stress. Consider asking a loved one or counsellor for support. Relaxation techniques are not a substitute for medical treatment in the event of an illness. Seek medical attention when necessary, and implement these helpful strategies to prevent and reduce the amount of stress in your life.

While relaxation techniques won't eliminate the stress in your life, they will help with managing your stress load. Regardless of where you land on the stress spectrum, from feeling overwhelmed to managing your stress well, these activities will reduce the effects of stress on your mind and body. Relaxation techniques are low-cost and low-risk for injury, and they can be performed almost anywhere. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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