



Mental Health Matters: So what can we do?

Many people are stressed, distressed and struggling to cope. It can be very difficult to know what to do about our own difficulties and additionally worrying when we are open to the suffering of others. It's easy to feel helpless and overwhelmed. We're in a real struggle and it's likely to go on for a while yet ... so what can we do? It's a good question, one which suggests that there are things to be done, actions we can take but also that we are not alone and we may be able to do things together - mutual support.

In some ways it all starts with acceptance ... we may wish things were different but facing and helping one another to face how things are and where we are can be the beginning of doing something useful about it.

There's a risk that any list of choices can seem too much or a bit of a cliché ... but here's some **examples of what's happening currently in our community**, what people are finding helpful and what we can access or add to ourselves:



Care, kindness and friendliness are the foundations of mental health. Supporting one another takes many forms and is a key. From **friendly interest over the fence** to **starting or joining a Zoom or WhatsApp group**.

Cultivating understanding – these **Friday Postings** are just one offer that seeks to introduce a wide range of helpful, and often local, ideas and information and an invitation for people to share experience with one another ... it's good to ask questions and seek information – understanding can reduce fear.

Reaching out ... Lockdown leads to disconnection, even isolation. All kinds of (re)connections can be helpful, **for example, the Bradninch and Hele Facebook page** offers a steady stream of invitations to join with interests, activities, people and groups.

Signposting ... asking for help is one of the great skills of life, but really quite difficult to do particularly when you need something ... but it may be a lot easier if you know where to turn. **Services exist to serve, and remain available, from Bradninch Together to Samaritans and local Health and Social Care ...** see guidance at <https://www.bradninchtogether.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing>

Activism ... campaigning, advocating, raising awareness helps not only the 'Cause' but those who join in actively supporting it and all the better if we do it together ... for example, **Will Birley and the Talk Clothing Challenge.**

Learning and Training ... we need hope to cope ... we also need skills and we can find inspiration, guidance and support for healthful practices of many kinds from many active providers including the **Devon Recovery Learning Community** and we hope to organise **local awareness training and mental health first aid when possible.**

So ... what can we do? Many things ... and often small and apparently ordinary actions can make a real difference. What have you found helpful? The important issue is being aware that there are options, taking a look, making a choice and getting started, as best we can. We're unlikely to come up with perfect solutions but learning to look after ourselves, caring and drawing on support offered by others, holds a good chance of being 'good enough.'

All good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

Ps. Do let us know if you have responses to this post, suggestions or offers to make for future postings