

# A Problem Shared is a Problem Halved



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# A Problem Shared is a Problem Halved

A health reader for Entry 2  
ESOL students

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One in four people in the UK will have a mental illness at some time in their life.

That's about 16 million people in the UK.

Mental health problems are more common than most physical illnesses, yet less spoken about.

At any one time, about 31,000 adults in Tower Hamlets have a mental health problem.

Anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in the UK. One in five older people get depression. About 10% of children and about 90% of people in prison have mental health problems.

It is possible to actively look after your mental health and wellbeing to avoid experiencing problems.

If you think you might have a mental health problem and need help, see your GP as soon as possible or ring NHS 111. Also, you can check your symptoms or find out about mental health services in your area

by visiting [www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Mentalhealth](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Mentalhealth)



Amal is 39 years old and comes from Somalia. She lives in east London with her three children. She is a widow. Her husband died suddenly from a heart attack twelve years ago and Amal has had to bring up the children on her own. She is finding life hard.



To escape the war in Somalia, Amal lived in a refugee camp in Ethiopia before coming to the UK in 1999. Her father was killed fighting in the war and her mother got sick in the refugee camp and died. Not a day goes by when she doesn't think about her parents. She misses them very much.



When her children were younger, Amal would get up early to pray, then make the breakfast and take them to school. She used to go to ESOL classes during the day and would help the children do their homework when they got home. Amal was always very busy, she didn't have time to worry.



Now the children are teenagers and going to college. They don't need her so much and she is on her own for most of the day. Amal feels very lonely. She doesn't have any friends. She used to discuss any problems with her husband. "A problem shared is a problem halved," he used to say.



Amal has difficulty sleeping. She feels tired all the time and is really down. She would like to get out more and meet people but there is this little voice inside her head that says “You’re useless and ugly, who’s going to want to know you, you are better off staying at home.”



One day, Amal loses her temper with her son, Yasir, and starts shouting at him. "Mum, you've changed," says Yasir, "you're always bad tempered these days. You need to get some help. We were looking at the NHS Choices website at college, maybe there's some information on there. I can help you search for it."



Yasir helps his mum get on the website. She discovers there is something called the Moodzone with a 'Check Your Mood' questionnaire. She does the questionnaire and gets a high score for anxiety and depression. It advises her to go and see her GP to discuss how she is feeling. Amal decides to make an appointment.



The GP asks Amal some questions. “How long have you been feeling like this?” she says. “It’s not unusual to feel this way. I can give you some tablets that might help, but what I really think you need is someone to talk to. There is a local charity that helps people with depression. They run a women’s group, why don’t you go?”



Amal feels really nervous about meeting new people. “You won’t know what to say and they’ll think you’re stupid,” says the little voice inside her head. It is such a long time since she has spoken to anyone her own age. At the charity, she sees a wellbeing adviser who introduces her to the group.



At the women's group everyone is really friendly. They discuss their problems. It really helps to talk and she discovers that other people feel the same as her. Amal begins to realise that her depression is linked to the deaths of her husband and parents and being on her own all day doesn't help either.



Amal makes a new friend called Rafiqqa who is also a widow. Together they learn about the five ways to wellbeing: Connect with other people, be active and exercise regularly, take notice by being aware of the present moment, keep learning and set yourself goals and give to others.



Amal wants to change her life, so she becomes a volunteer interpreter and carer at her local hospital. She joins a walking group and signs up for a computer class. Now she has made some new friends, she feels much better. "A problem shared really is a problem halved," she thinks, smiling to herself.

# Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Amal leave Somalia?

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2. Why is Amal lonely?

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3. Why is Amal depressed?

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4. What are the symptoms of depression?

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5. Where can you find the Moodzone?

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6. What can you do to help depression?

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## Consultation at the Doctor's

-  Hello. How can I help you today?
-  Hello doctor, I don't know what's the matter with me but I just don't feel right.
-  Have you got any symptoms?
-  I'm not sleeping very well. I'm not interested in food at the moment and I just feel like staying at home.
-  Do you have any physical symptoms, any pain anywhere?
-  No, not really.
-  How long have you been feeling like this?
-  I don't really know, it's been like this for some months.
-  Did anything happen to start this off?
-  Well, my nan died and I got laid off my part-time job.
-  It sounds to me like you are depressed and need a little bit of help so you feel better. I think you need people to talk to. I can put you in touch with a local support group.
-  Thank you very much doctor.

# Glossary

advise	to tell someone what they should do
anxiety	worry or nervousness
bad tempered	gets angry easily
charity	an organisation that helps people
depression	feeling very unhappy and without hope
escape	to get away from somewhere or something
feel down	to feel unhappy or depressed
goal	something you hope to achieve
halved	to be cut by half
lonely	unhappy because you are on your own
mood	the way you feel at a particular time
refugee	a person who has had to leave their country
share	to tell someone how you are feeling
widow	a person whose wife or husband has died

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