

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Studies repeatedly show that, when it comes to the mental health of young people, there is cause for concern. Young people are under more and more pressure to succeed, and stress levels, fear of failure, symptoms of depression and even suicide rates are unfortunately on the rise. Worries about debt, the housing shortage and the climate crisis make it difficult for many young people to feel hopeful about the future.

In March we launched MIND Us, a foundation of which I am honorary chair. MIND Us wants all young people to have the opportunity to develop with resilience. That's only possible when young people are in control of their mental health and know how to get help when they need it. Fortunately, a lot is being done on this front. Together with young people themselves, MIND Us is looking at the initiatives already in place and the effects they are having. We are then going to link up and promote initiatives that work well. We'll do this through platforms that young people are familiar with: their school or university, their neighbourhood sports club or association and, of course, social media.

We know already that, when it comes to mental health issues, time is of the essence. The earlier we identify the signs, the greater the likelihood that young people will be able to address issues before they get out of hand. Mental health issues often appear at an early age: three quarters appear before the age of 25, and one half before the age of 15.

To all the young people I want to say: please talk, talk, talk. Because talking really does help. Talk about what you're feeling with friends, your parents or other trusted people close to you. Let them know when you're doing well and – even more importantly – when you're not. Because you're not alone. Not every day has to be a ten out of ten. You don't have to succeed at everything you do. And you don't always have to be happy. Some days just aren't as fun as others. Sometimes things don't work out the way you expected. And that's okay. It happens to everyone. The course of life doesn't run in a straight line.

I also want to ask parents, teachers, coaches and other role models to set a good example by talking honestly about their own feelings. Help show our young people the right path. Work together to be a support network and help young people learn to deal with setbacks, sadness and stress. You will no doubt also learn something from them in return. We must be willing to look honestly at ourselves and help each other find balance in life.

In all the conversations that I have with you young people, I hear and see your power, vulnerability and openness. And I see the struggle with the high expectations that you set for yourself and for your life. You deserve our unconditional support and help to preserve your mental health. That starts with something as simple as having someone to listen to you and have an honest conversation with. Together, there's a lot we can do to help everyone on the path to a healthy future. On 6 December MIND Us will present its plans for the years ahead, and you can be sure that young people will be at the heart of these plans. We're going to do this together – with your help, we can make a difference.

Her Majesty Queen Máxima,
Honorary chair and co-initiator of MIND Us

