



## How to feel less alone

### **brainstrust information sheet**

Know Hows are published by *brainstrust* to help people living with a brain tumour to understand current topics. They are produced with input from relevant scientific and clinical experts and are written in a way that should help you to understand often complicated topics.

If you have an idea for a Know How, then please let us know.

If you have any queries, don't forget you can talk to one of our support specialists on **01983 292 405**, or email **hello@brainstrust.org.uk**.

### **Why do we need this Know How?**

*'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.'*

John Donne

Living with or beyond a brain tumour can be incredibly lonely and isolating. However supportive your friends and family are, you may feel like they don't really understand, and this can make you feel that you are in a lonely place. The coronavirus pandemic has made it more difficult to spend time with others, and this can leave you feeling even further removed from your support network.

This Know How will outline some of the things you can do to feel included, not isolated.

### **What does this mean?**

Feeling connected and supported is important for our overall health and well-being. Maslow (1987) suggested that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy and that love and belonging is the next-greatest need once basic physiological and safety needs are met. By 'physiological needs',

we mean food, warmth and shelter. When you are living with a brain tumour, connecting with others who understand and are in a similar situation can help you feel less alone.

### **What can I do?**

#### **Keep to a schedule**

When you are diagnosed with a brain tumour, your world changes, and your daily life may be different from how it was. Planning your day – including things like making your bed, getting dressed for the day, going for a walk outside – can be a healthy way for you to focus your attention and combat feelings of loneliness. You can read more about how to bring structure to your day [here](#).

#### **Stay active**

Exercise can boost your mental health. Choose something you enjoy and that works for you. It could be doing the household chores, getting out in the garden, taking part in an online exercise class or going for a walk. Planning in rest is important too. More information about exercise and rest can be found [here](#).

## Say hello

It's amazing how connecting with someone, even briefly, can lift your spirits. If you pass someone when you're out for a walk, smile and say hello. Most people will be grateful for the connection – don't take it personally if you don't get a response.

## Do something you enjoy

This is great for your emotional well-being. Can you remember an occasion when you were so engrossed in something you were doing that you lost track of time? It might be reading a book, doing some knitting, cooking or going for a walk. What makes your heart sing? You can find more ideas [here](#).

## Practise mindfulness

Mindfulness can help give us new perspectives on life. It creates space for you to just stop for a while. You can find out more about mindfulness and how to practise it [here](#).

## Spend time with your pet

A dog is a man's best friend. Playing with your pet or giving them a fuss can lift your mood.

## Reach out to friends and family

Stay in touch with your loved ones. Send them a message, or better still, give them a call and have a good old catch-up. It's easy to close down our communication channels because it takes effort, and sometimes we just need to go that extra mile to connect.

## Connect with other members of the brain tumour community

Speaking with others who understand and are in a similar situation can be a vital part of feeling better connected and part of a community.

You could visit the [brain tumour hub](#) to find support groups near you, register to attend a [Thrive \*brainstrust\* event](#), find out more about [peer support](#) or join our [private Facebook community](#).

## Talk to a health professional or counsellor

Your GP will be able to provide you with information on how to access talking therapies. You can also contact the Samaritans on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).

## Ask yourself

- What does feeling less alone look like?
- What makes me happy?
- What has helped when I have felt this way before?
- Who is in my team?
- What support do I need?
- How and when will I enlist that support?

## Contact

Talk to *brainstrust*. We can help. You can call, write, type, text. Email for help and support: [hello@brainstrust.org.uk](mailto:hello@brainstrust.org.uk). Telephone: **01983 292 405**.

## Other helpful links

[Managing transitions Know How](#)

[Mindfulness Know How](#)

[How to build a supportive team Know How](#)

[www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/tips-to-manage-loneliness/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/tips-to-manage-loneliness/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/feeling-lonely/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/feeling-lonely/)

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