

MENTAL HEALTH



CAREGIVERS  
GUIDEBOOK

# CONTRIBUTIONS

The content in this guidebook has been developed in coordination with:

- Person's with lived experience of having a mental health condition,
- Caregivers,
- Ministry of Health, Department of Health Promotions, and
- Nairobi County Covid IEC TWG partners



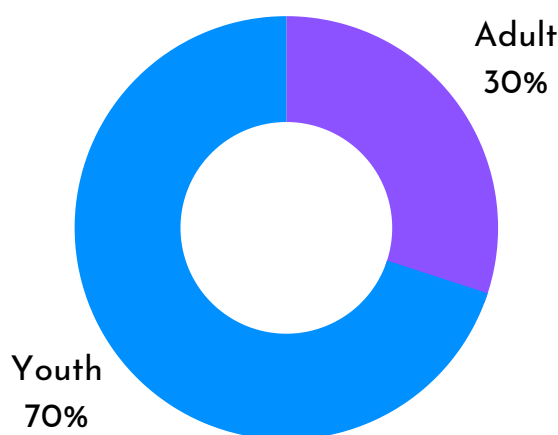
This funding is from Comic Relief & UK aid Mental Health Programme

# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guidebook is to improve caregivers' understanding of mental health and help them develop skills to support their own wellbeing and provide adequate support to people with lived experiences of mental health conditions (champions).

# IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Youth in Nairobi face challenges to their mental wellbeing such as rising alcohol and drug misuse, increased gambling and urbanization.



**70%**  
of the Kenyan population is below 24 years of age (2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census)

The consequences of not addressing mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.

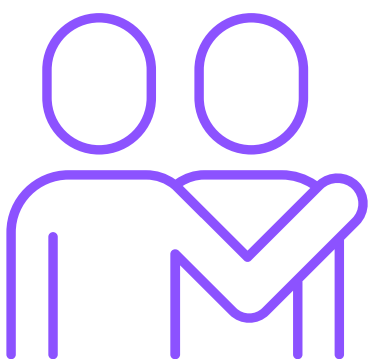


Mental disorders begin early in life and young people comprise the group that is most affected.



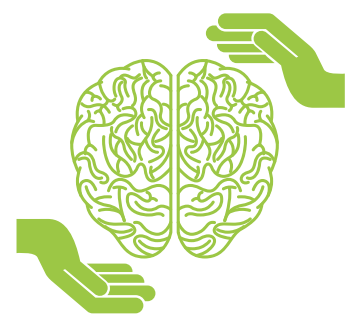
Families and caregivers of people with mental health conditions are themselves at increased risk of developing mental health conditions yet they play a key role in relapse prevention and promoting wellbeing.

### Who is a caregiver?



A caregiver is anyone who provides support to people with mental health conditions, typically a family member, loved one or friend.

### What is mental health?



Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of well-being in which the individual:

- realises his or her own abilities,
- can cope with the normal stresses of life,
- can work productively fully, and
- is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

# MENTAL STATES

The diagram below can help a caregiver understand how the words that we use help us better recognize the different mental health states champions and themselves are in.

Symptoms	Mental health states	Definition
Pensive/ thoughtful	<b>Mental wellbeing</b>	It is about how good and fulfilling you feel that your life is, irrespective of your mental health condition.
Upset, sad, unhappy, disappointed, angry, bitter, blue, down, dejected, pessimistic, distressed	<b>Mental distress</b>	This is the brain's expected and usual response to the stresses of everyday life e.g. exams, relationships, disappointments.
Heartbroken, sorrowful, demoralized, grieving, mournful, despairing	<b>Mental health condition</b>	The brain's response to a severe or persistent life problem e.g. death of a family member, severe bullying, parent divorce.
Depression	<b>Mental illness/ disorder</b>	Mental illness, also called mental health disorders, refers to a wide range of mental health conditions - disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior e.g. anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

*(Source: Mental Health 101, Dr. Stan Kutcher)*

## UNHELPFUL STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS THAT CAN TRIGGER

### Words

- "You need to pray more and think positive"
- "Be a man and man up, stop being weak"
- "Just pray and everything will be okay"
- "You should be grateful, there are people worse than you, it's all in your mind"
- "Mental illness should not be an excuse "
- "It happens to everyone and we're still fine"

### Actions

- Being dismissive and downplaying how one feels
- Giving advice instead of just listening
- Not respecting boundaries
- Not separating the person from the disease and showing too much pity
- Assuming you understand what one is going through and comparing their situation to another person's
- Expecting one to simply snap out of a mental health problem
- Using stigmatizing words and phrases to describe what one is going through
- Insisting that one is sick

## HELPFUL WAYS TO SHOW CARE AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

- Learning and understanding what exactly the illness/problem is
- Listening without judgement
- Giving space and respecting boundaries
- Being a listening ear
- Honest and open communication
- Understanding what to say and what not to say
- Going for walks and participating in a fun activity together
- Being proactive and present in their journey and life
- Be understanding when one is struggling with their mental health
- Words of encouragement, love and appreciation
- Understanding that everyone's journey and experience is unique and different

# RECOGNIZING AND MANAGING TRIGGERS

A trigger is a situation that causes a strong emotional reaction. In order to reduce the likelihood of being triggered while taking care of the champions, and to reduce the impact should one be triggered, it is important to consider triggers beforehand.

Below are some fun activities that caregivers and champions can do together:



In your own time, sit with your champion and find out:

What are possible trigger words?

What situations are likely to be triggering?

How do these triggers manifest?



Consider the questions below and write down your thoughts on a piece of paper:

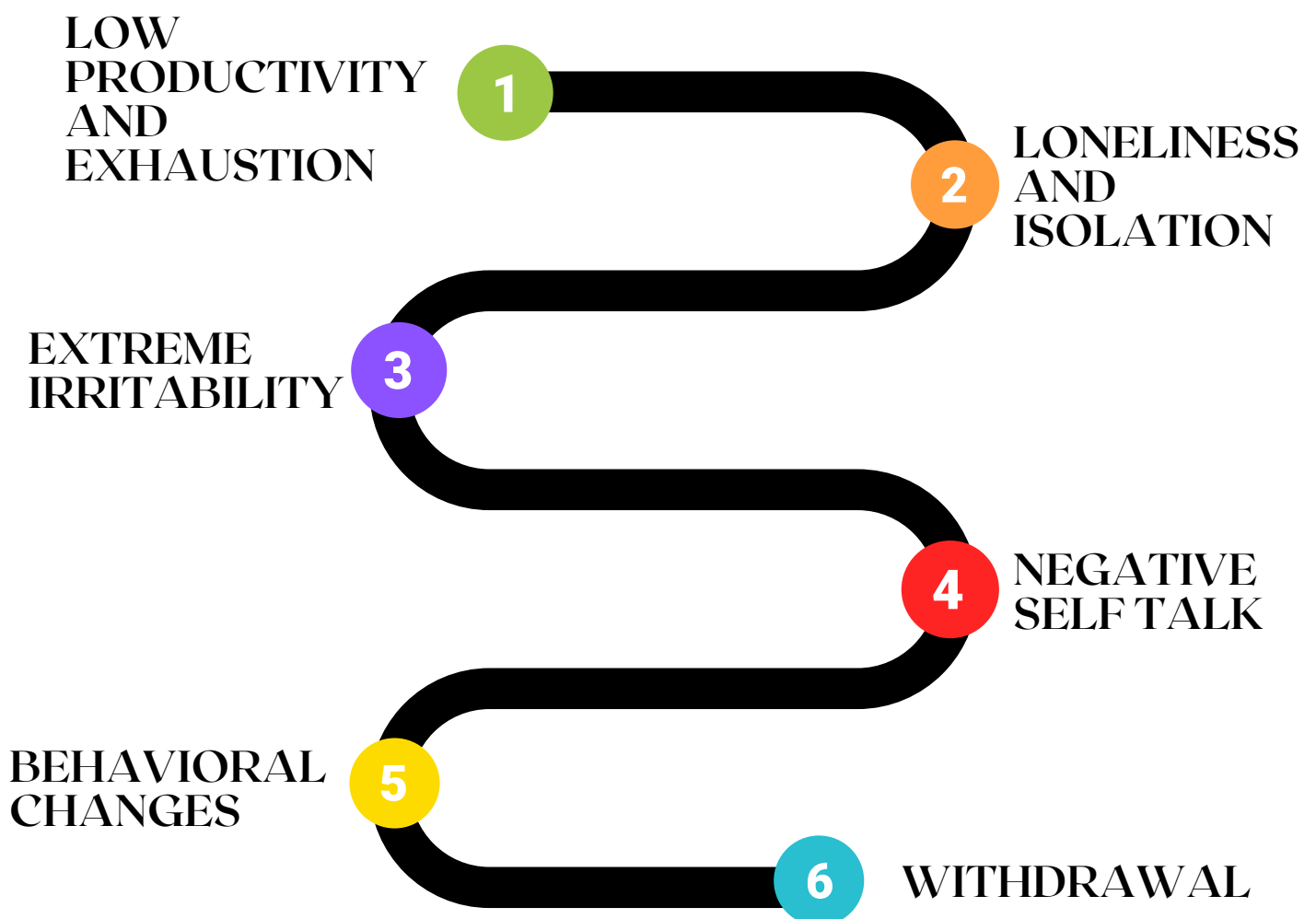
What might affect my mental wellbeing in my role as a caregiver?

What will I notice (in my thoughts, feelings or behaviors) if I am triggered / finding things difficult?

# WARNING SIGNS

When is it time to seek assistance from health providers? It's often not clear when intervention is necessary, and people who are experiencing a mental illness may themselves not always be aware of what's going on, and can be reluctant to come forward for fear of being stigmatized.

Below are some warnings signs to look out for:





# TIPS ON SHOWING SUPPORT

## "I haven't heard from them in ages"

It's possible that someone experiencing a mental health condition might isolate themselves.

Having a mental health condition can be really draining, and low moods or anxious feelings can make it tough to be sociable - they may also feel like their presence places a burden on their friends and family.

Stay in contact and be yourself. It might feel frustrating if you're putting in effort, but try and be patient - things are probably hard for them.

They probably appreciate you being in touch even if they're not responding - a mental health condition can be overwhelming and can make it difficult to maintain a 'normal' social life.

It could be nothing, but if they are hard to reach, it might be a sign that they're not well so stay in touch.

## "Their appearance has changed and they're not looking after themselves"

Sometimes the impact of a mental health condition, combined with other pressures in life, can be too much for someone, and they might neglect to look after their appearance or body.

Maybe they're not eating well, or they're not keeping up with personal hygiene.

Ask them how things are going - listen and don't judge.

If they're feeling overwhelmed, you might be able to help them with particular tasks they can't do. If it feels right, ask if there's anything you can help with.

If they are going through a hard time, your attitude can make a huge difference.

## "They are using social media differently"

You might have noticed a change in the way someone is using social media. For example, they might be posting way more or may have gone completely silent.

It could be nothing, but it could also be a sign that they're experiencing a mental health condition. Either way, they may well need your support.

Keep a close eye out for subtle changes in their language or the way they are using their social media pages i.e. posting cries for help or cryptic messages.

If you are still worried, send them a private message to ask how they are doing – they are more likely to respond to this than a public message.

If they've completely disappeared from social media, try to get in touch by other means or contact their friends & family.

If someone is going through a tough time, stepping in and showing you care could make all the difference.

## "They might be self-harming"

There are a lot of myths and false beliefs around self-harm that can stop people reaching out for support.

Not everyone who self-harms has the same experience, but often it is a way to cope with severe and real emotional pain. Your friend or loved one may need your support more than ever.

If someone opens up to you about self-harm, try not to panic or show judgement. It can be a hard thing to talk about, and your reaction might have an impact on their willingness to talk about it in future.

Listen to what they're saying and let them know you're there for them. If they're open to it, talk to them about the feelings that are driving the self-harm, encourage them to seek help.

Self-harm is not the same as attempted suicide, but someone who is self-harming is at increased risk of suicide – the only way to know is to ask.



## **FUN ACTIVITY:**

**ASK THE CHAMPION WHAT HELPS THEM TO THRIVE AS AN INDIVIDUAL, NOTE AND REFLECT ON THEIR ANSWERS**



# "HOW DOES A CAREGIVER KNOW THEY ARE EXPERIENCING STRESS/BURNOUT?"

- ✓ Feeling frustrated and angry one minute and helpless the next
- ✓ Making mistakes when giving medicine(s)
- ✓ Feeling overwhelmed and tired most of the time
- ✓ Feeling worried or sad often
- ✓ Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- ✓ Turning to unhealthy behaviors like smoking or drinking too much alcohol
- ✓ Feeling alone, isolated, or deserted by others
- ✓ Becoming easily irritated or angered
- ✓ Sleeping and eating too much or too little
- ✓ Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- ✓ Having headaches or body aches often

# CAREGIVER SELFCARE TIPS

When taking care of others there may be situations or times that are difficult and so it is very important that we think now about how we will support ourselves during our time as caregivers.

1

## Practise problem solving

Divide the problem into small steps and tackle only one problem at a time. Sometimes it is useful to draw a picture of the problem to help understand.

3

## Seek support

Caregivers often feel isolated and may struggle with feelings of frustration, resentment or guilt. Seeking support provides a safe place to express these emotions as well as cope.

2

## Take time off

It may seem like there aren't enough hours in the day, but self-care becomes more important than ever when you're caring for others. Regularly taking some time for yourself can go a long way toward managing caregiver stress.

4

## Ask for help

Enlist backup and work with family members to create a plan together. When friends and neighbours offer to help, take them up on it.

## 1. Mindfulness coloring

This is a form of meditation exercise. Instead of sitting in silence or listening to a piece of music for example, you instead bring your attention to the present moment through coloring – focusing on the colors and shapes.

You can practice mindfulness coloring (see final page) in your own time using this artwork designed by a Champion - Brian Emmanuel Maina.

## 2. Box breathing.

This can help your heart rate return to normal, which helps you to relax.

**Step 1:** Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.

**Step 2:** Hold your breath for 4 seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.

**Step 3:** Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.

**Step 4:** Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing again.

Repeat this process as many times as you can. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.



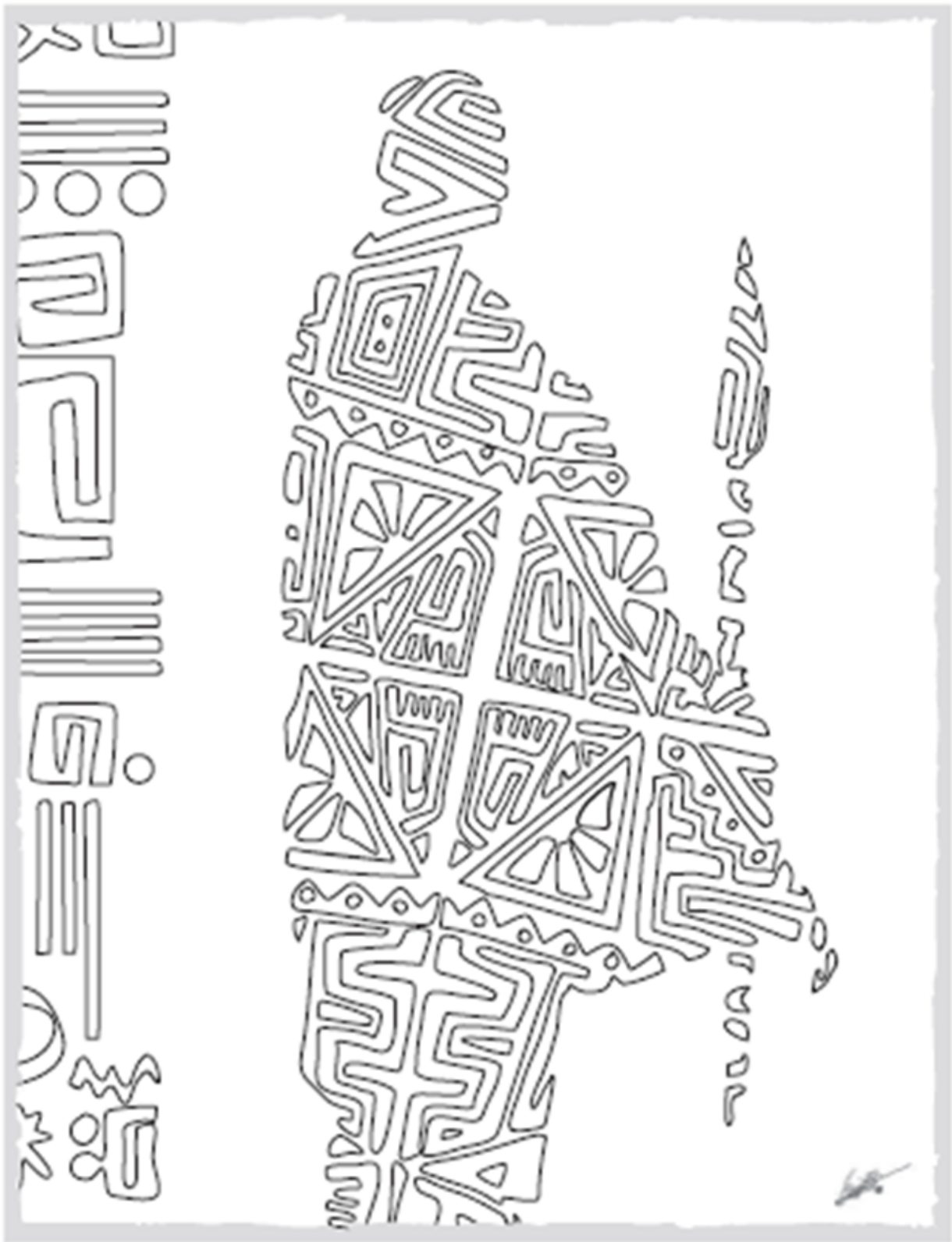
TECHNIQUES TO HELP  
DEAL WITH  
STRESS

## MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

<b>Sub-county</b>	<b>Facility</b>	<b>Services Available</b>	<b>Clinic Days</b>
Lang'ata	Mbagathi Hospital	Psychiatric clinic Psychotherapy clinic	Tues & Thur Mon to Fri
Makadara	Jericho HC	Psychiatric services	Wed
Dagoretti	Mutuini Hospital	Counselling services Psychiatry clinic	Mon - Thur Wed
Kamukunji	Pumwani Maternity Hospital	Maternal mental health services Psychiatric clinic	Mon - Fri
Ruaraka	Mathare North Health Centre	Psychiatric & Counselling	Tue
Starehe	Ngara health Center & Methadone clinic	Psychotherapy & Counselling	Mon, Tue & Wed
Embakasi East	Mukuru kwa Njenga HC	Counselling services	Daily
Westlands	Kangemi Health Centre	Epilepsy clinic	Monday
Embakasi West	Mama Lucy Kibaki hospital	Psychotherapy (counseling)	Mon - Fri
Kasarani	Kariobangi North HC	Psychiatry Clinic	Monday



# FUN ACTIVITY: MINDFULNESS COLOURING



Designed by Brian Emmanuel Maina