

## Guided Self Help – An Introduction

- > Why can't my doctor just give me a pill?
- > Why doesn't the nurse just tell me what to do to get better?
- > Why can't the health visitor just tell me what to do to be a better mother?
- > How can reading a leaflet make me feel better?

These sorts of questions may pop into your head after your guide has started talking to you about guided self-help. This leaflet will help you to understand why your guide has chosen to try and work with you using these leaflets.



Guided self-help is a way of helping you help yourself that has been shown to be effective with mild to moderate mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression. It can also be used to help people with more serious mental health problems but in that case the guide would be an experienced mental health professional. In your case, your guide has received some training in helping people to use self-help materials.

Some important points are:

- Your guide is not there to cure you or do the therapy for you, but to help you to help yourself.
- The self-help materials are based on cognitive behavioural therapy, which is a proven treatment for mild to moderate anxiety and depression.
- You and your guide will arrange to meet at regular intervals for a series of short appointments.
- To begin with you will identify problems and goals to work on.
- The sessions will start with a look back at what you have tried to achieve since the last session and will give you a chance to discuss with your guide what you have achieved and any difficulties you have faced.
- You and your guide will then discuss what you will try to achieve before the next session.

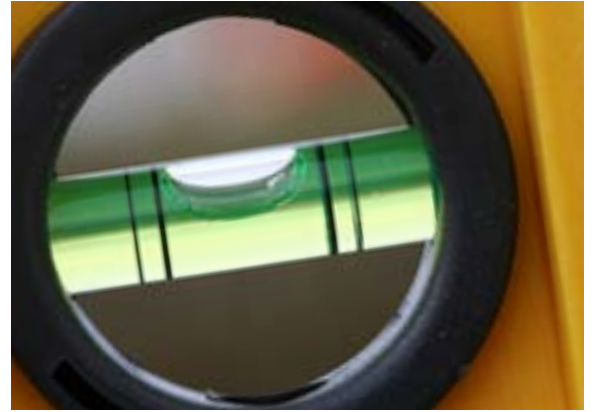
There are different leaflets available depending on your problems and aims. Everybody works at a different pace and it is important not to rush things and to practice what you have learned and the changes you have made until you are ready to move on. There is no fixed way of using self-help materials - the decision when to stop the sessions will be made by you and your guide, hopefully when you feel able to continue using the self-help materials yourself, perhaps with support from someone else such as a family member or friend.

Medication may also be used together with the self-help leaflets. Medication can sometimes

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make it easier to help yourself by lifting your mood or calming your anxious symptoms but the simple fact is that medication doesn't always help and the unwanted effects of the medication can sometimes cancel out any benefits. If you are taking medication, it is important to take it regularly and in the right dose, and to tell your doctor or guide what effect it is having every time you see them.



It is important that you try to help yourself as much as possible, to help you build confidence in your ability to face and tackle your mental health problems by putting into practice in your daily life the things that you learn.

You will have the leaflets to refer to, plus any records that you keep of what you have done, so that you can go on helping yourself for the rest of your life.

### KEY POINTS:

- > Make time to work on the leaflet
- > Try and find a quiet place to read the leaflet undisturbed
- > Read the leaflet as often as you need to
- > Try to fill in the exercises and diaries, even if it is just a few words
- > Make changes gradually and don't expect miracles
- > Give yourself a pat on the back for any achievement, however small it may seem
- > Don't waste time or energy criticising yourself when things go badly
- > Bring any work you have done to your sessions with your guide