

**HEALTH MATTERS - SAMARITANS AWARENESS DAY**

This article is written to coincide with Samaritans Awareness Day on Friday 24 July. **The Samaritans’ phone number, 20000, connects to the UK and is free.**

Nearly a third of people in the UK say they don’t like to burden others with their problems, according to research for the charity Samaritans and - although this is not a survey that has been carried out on St Helena - experience would lead us to believe that the figures if collected would be similar.

The figures, published today to launch Samaritans’ awareness-raising #TalkToUs campaign, also reveal that more than 1 in 5 (21.4%) people sometimes feel overwhelmed by their troubles, but 1 in 9 (11.4%) feel they don’t have anyone to share them with.

Other barriers to opening up about what’s bothering us include:

* Feeling embarrassed (1 in 7 or 14.4%)
* Feeling weak (1 in 10 or 10.2%)
* Feeling judged (1 in 12 or 8.3%)
* Being seen as ‘weird’ (1 in 15 or 6.4%)

For those of us who do feel able to share our problems, the person we are most likely to go to is a partner (more than 1 in 3 of us, 34.4%), then a friend (1 in 5 of us,

20.1%).  Just under 1 in 7 of us (13.1%) will sadly just bottle it up, and nearly 1 in 10 of us (9.2%) will avoid people and spend time alone.

Over and above big life events such as a bereavement, redundancy or divorce, the survey also asked people to list the day to day ‘ordinary’ things that have been bothering them the most in the last 12 months. The top five in order are:

* Relationships (48.6%)
* Work (in particular, workload) (46.6%)
* Home life (36.1%)
* Physical health (36.1%)
* Family arguments (32.3%)

Also ranking highly were finances (26.3%), income (25.6%), mental health (23.8%) and debt (20%).

Samaritans’ Chair, experienced volunteer, Jenni McCartney, says talking can really help people to see a way through their problems:

*“There’s nothing weak or weird about talking about what’s getting to you. Recognising your need to talk is a strength. Everyone’s different and what one person might cope with can easily overwhelm another. Our volunteers can support you, whatever you’re going through - work stress, money troubles, family difficulties, sexuality issues, or a big life event. Samaritans volunteers are here round the clock every day of the year to listen in confidence to whatever you need to share.”*

Deputy CEO of Samaritans, Fiona Malcolm, hopes its #TalkToUs campaign will reach people who may not realise its services are there for everyone. Anyone can contact Samaritans, round the clock every single day of the year, about anything that’s bothering them:

*“If you are struggling to cope, the benefits of sharing your concerns can be absolutely huge.  People who have contacted Samaritans tell us that feeling listened to, understood and cared for has helped them feel better and less alone.  Even if their problem couldn’t be resolved by the end of their exchange with us, simply the process of sharing was sometimes enough to start the process of healing - leading to taking positive action or seeking other forms of help.”*

Callers can be assured that any calls placed via this number will be directed to Samaritans in the UK, and are entirely confidential. The call will not appear on the caller’s telephone bills.

Samaritans are there 24 hours a day, every single day of the year to provide emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of emotional distress. Samaritans are committed to the following values:

* Listening without judging
* Confidentiality
* People making their own decisions
* Giving people time and space to talk with another person, about whatever is getting to them, to help see a way through.

SHG understands the increasing needs of the community and this support service complements existing local services.

**The free telephone number for the Samaritans is 20000.**

Until next time,

**Marian Kanes**

**Health Promotion Trainer**

**SHG**

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