

Mind by Toni Hayward.

“We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect.”

Mind (2016)



Mind, n.d.



Mind.

100 in Britain.

Various schemes
throughout the
organisation.

A photograph of two people sitting in folding chairs on a grassy hill, silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare. Tree branches hang down from the top of the frame. A large, light blue curved shape on the right side of the image contains text.

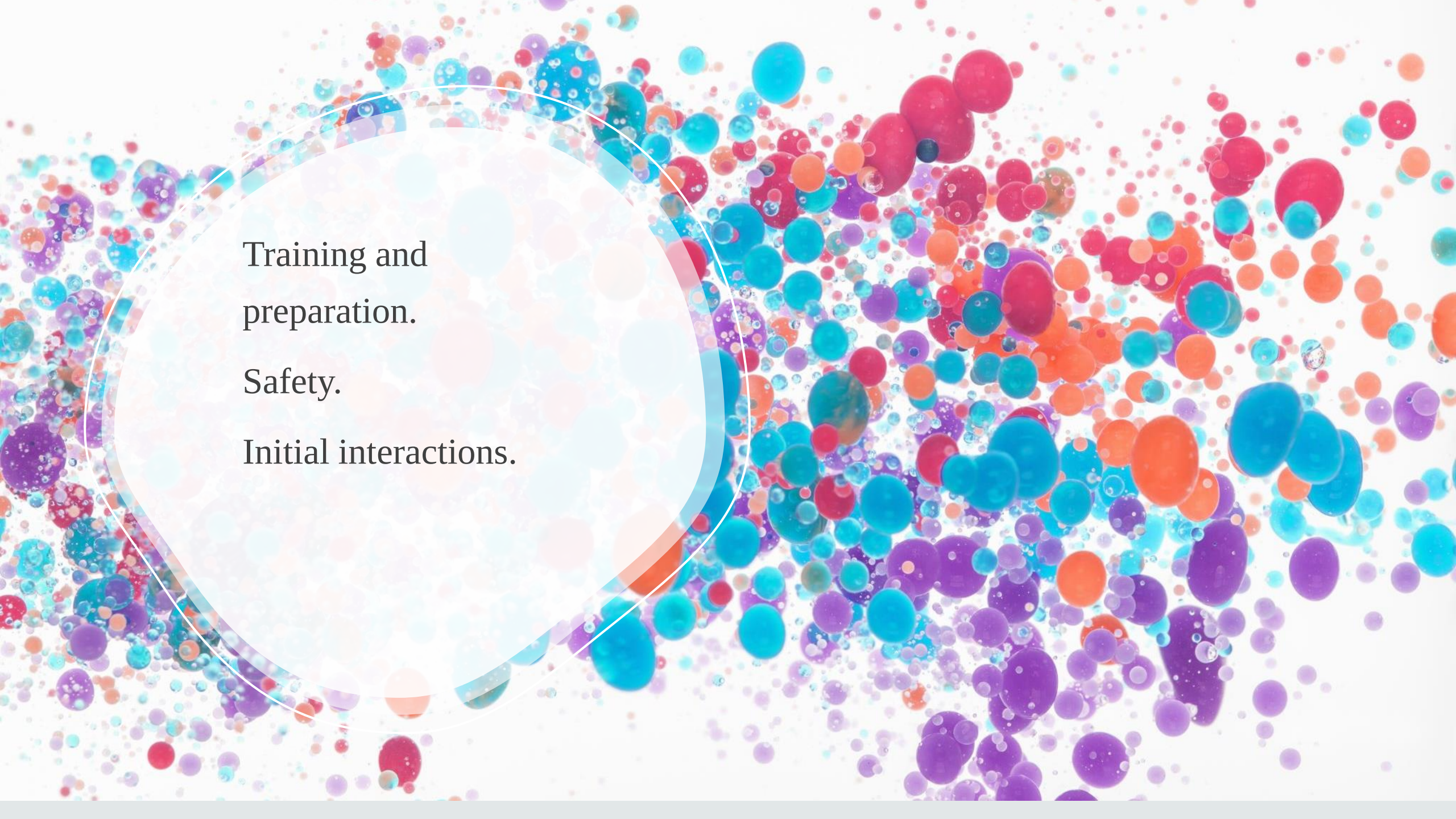
Mind Befriending Sir Gar

Support through
friendship.

Mild to Moderate
mental health needs

Informal, confidential
and free.

Talking at sunset, n.d.

The background of the slide is a dense field of colorful, translucent bubbles in shades of blue, red, orange, and purple. A large, white, semi-transparent circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, containing the text.

Training and
preparation.

Safety.

Initial interactions.

The background is a dense field of overlapping circles in various sizes and colors, including red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. A large, semi-transparent white circle is positioned on the left side of the image, containing the text.

Advice giving.

Providing information.



Coping mechanisms for
anxiety attacks.

Mindfulness.

Hoffman and Gomez (2017)

The background of the slide is filled with a dense, overlapping pattern of colorful bubbles in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. A large, white, semi-transparent circle is centered on the left side of the image, containing the text.

Substantial responsibility.

Second Service user.

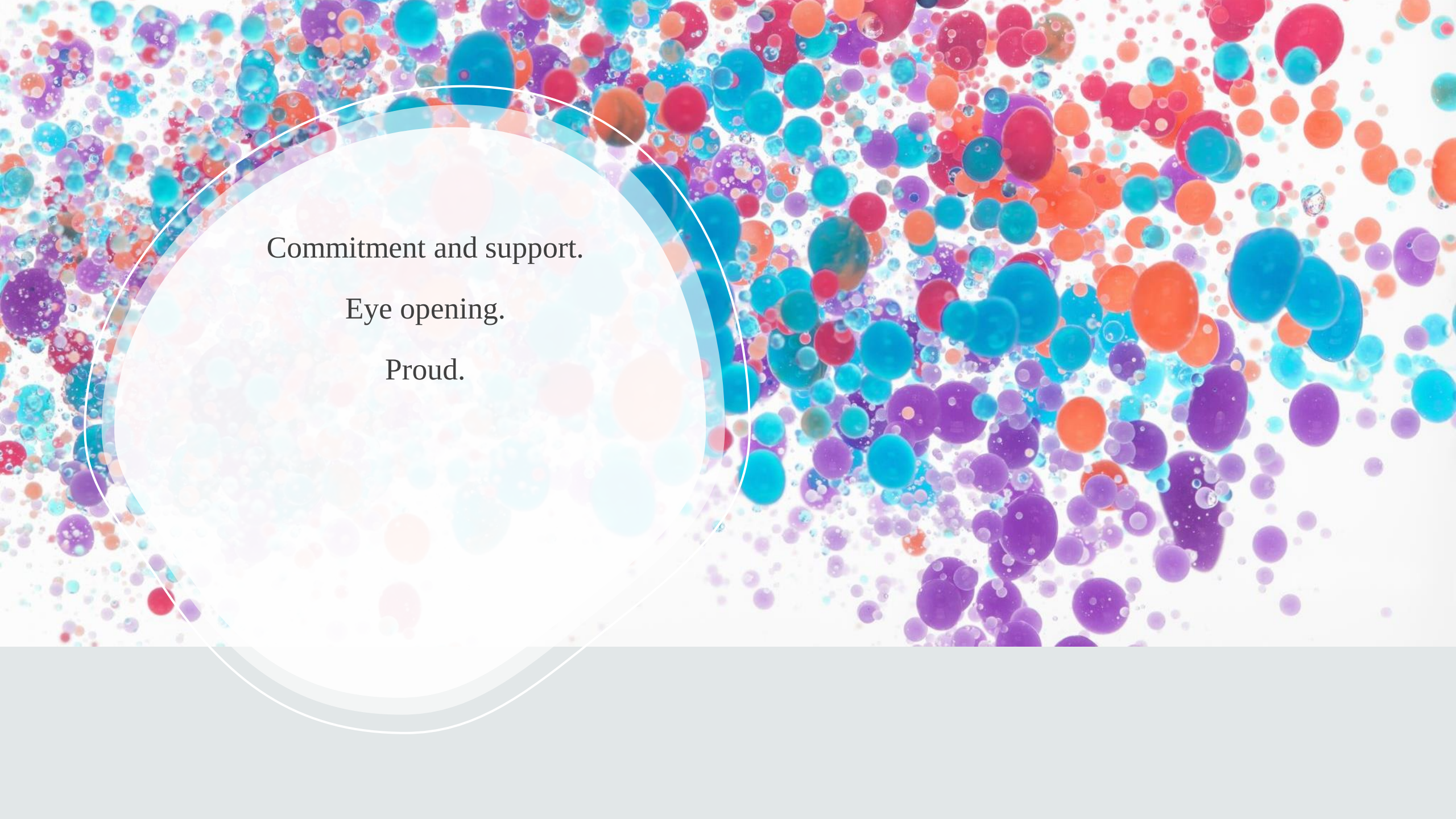
Very apprehensive.



Further training.

Fundraising.

Journaling.

The background is a dense field of colorful, translucent bubbles in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. A large, white, semi-transparent circle is positioned on the left side of the image, containing the text. The text is centered within the circle and consists of three lines: "Commitment and support.", "Eye opening.", and "Proud.".

Commitment and support.

Eye opening.

Proud.

References.

Bishop SR. Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*. 2004;11(3):230–241.
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Hofmann, S. G., & Gómez, A. F. (2017). Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Anxiety and Depression. *The Psychiatric clinics of North America*, 40(4), 739–749.
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Mind. (2016). *About us | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems*. Mind.org.uk. <https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/>

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Talking at Sunset. (n.d). Retrieved December 4th, 2021, from [talking - Bing images](#)

Fundraiser stamp image. (n.d). Retrieved December 3rd, 2021, from [fundraiser - Bing images](#)

Notes

For over 70 years, Mind has been tirelessly working towards transforming the attitudes of the general public in regards to mental health.

There are over 100 Mind communities in Britain, with 19 across Wales. Llanelli Mind is where I am taking part in my volunteering placement.

They offer a number of services to the public, such as their Active Monitoring branch. This is an early intervention service. Which is a 6 week self-help course which aims to help with things like anxiety, grief, anger management or stress. Each week the service user will be sent information that may help them deal with their mental health problem. As with all Mind services, this is free and does not require a referral from a professional- you can sign up.

The befriending scheme aims to support people with mental health needs by encouraging them to develop friendships with volunteers.

This offer of companionship at regular agreed intervals will hopefully reduce admissions/ re-admission to hospital by supporting the service user's personal skills and minimising the effects of their mental health issues.

Befriending is a scheme offered to people who have mild to moderate needs, for the safety of the service users and the volunteers this service is not offered to people who are in crisis or who's mental health needs are severe.

The scheme is informal, confidential and free, this may be more beneficial to some potential service users who may feel there is still stigma attached to seeking help, may be unable to fund private or paid for sessions and also may be more suited to a service user who has to work around other daily aspects of their life in order to seek the help they want.

I was quite surprised at how much training there was involved and how much support is offered to volunteers.

Obviously there has to be some rules in place for the safety of all involved in any aspect of volunteering with mental health implications. However, I was quite taken aback at the care taken to ensure that volunteers do not become overwhelmed. The volunteer is required to have a DBS check before proceeding, after which there is a full day's training provided. This training was quite rigorous and in depth. The aims, rules and regulations as set out by Mind are covered; as well as quite a substantial Safeguarding course. I felt that this encapsulated the organisations' want to help, not just those in crisis, but everyone.

I find and have always found interactions with new people to be somewhat of a challenge. Therefore, I found the initial outreach with my first service user quite intimidating. The service user was, when we began; very wary of being in social situations and therefore wanted contact via the telephone. After my safeguarding session I was very aware that I was to withhold my number, which increased my anxiousness. This was impacted by a sense of dread, that I was not ready or able to help and this person was needing exactly that.

Across all of aspects of my counselling module, I know I need to improve my advice giving.

It is an automatic response which I am slowly gaining more control over, however I am aware it still needs improvement. Being able to provide information without it turning into advice giving is much harder than I initially thought it would be.

During a session with my first service user, they mentioned that they didn't feel they had many coping mechanisms for their anxiety. I enquired about what they had in place and they advised that aside from prescribed medications, there wasn't anything and they didn't feel like that was enough and that they didn't want to rely on medications solely.

We discussed ideas of mindfulness, grounding techniques and breathing exercises that may be beneficial alongside the medications. I suggested there may be more techniques and ideas on the internet and if they were still unsure they could discuss this with their Active Monitoring supervisor when they were next in touch.

Bishop (2004) suggested that Mindfulness is both a self-regulation of attention and orienting yourself towards the present moment. Hoffman and Gomez (2017) found that Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) are efficient in reducing the symptom severity in clients experiencing anxiety. It is also an effective tool that can be self-taught and used throughout the client's life.

I feel that there is a massive sense of responsibility with this role in general, however there was none compared to being prepared for my second service user.

Although this service user was not in crisis, their previous history and needs put them at the highest point of consideration for befriending. Although they were a little more than they would usually pair with a volunteer, the befriending co-ordinator asked if I would be willing to try some sessions with this service user.

Upon starting and training with Mind, they ask you to explain why you would like to become a volunteer. I advised of my previous struggles with my mental health, partner abuse, loss and the extremes I had been to in coming through that. My supervisors felt that with my own experience, the course I am currently doing and the progress my initial service user was making; I would be a perfect fit.

I was very apprehensive but knew that if I had had someone with a similar past to speak with when I needed it, it would have been very beneficial.

As a part of the befriending team you are actively encouraged to participate in further training

I will be participating in some webinars before the end of the year. One for Relationships, family and mental health, one for self-care and one for managing your mind in relation to anxiety. This, hopefully, will be of benefit to my development as a counsellor and will enable me to be a better befriender to my service user's also.

There are multiple fundraisers organised throughout the year within the organisation, which go towards producing more activities for service users of the different schemes. We are often asked for ideas, I have suggested a Covid friendly comedy/drag queen night as a close friend is a drag queen and he is hilarious. This is being deliberated for a fundraiser in the New Year.

I am also writing a journal alongside my volunteer session, to recap the session and to endeavour to improve my own skills. This is also proactive in maintaining my own mental health, obviously some issues that service user have may be relatable or similar in previous experience, and therefore I need to ensure that I take care of myself also.

The behind the scenes work and commitment that goes into running an organisation like Mind is truly mind blowing. The staff and volunteers at Mind Befriending Sir Gar have been so helpful and supportive with my placement, their dedication to the service users has been truly inspiring.

Being a part of the befriending scheme has been quite eye opening for me, I didn't realise how many people there were who have low level mental health needs that need some support. I also didn't know quite how beneficial this would be to developing my counselling skills, but I have been pleasantly surprised.

I'm quite happy to say that I am incredibly proud of my service users and the progress they have made and continue to make as the weeks pass. My first service user was unable to leave the house for anything apart from work in September, now they are actively trying to go shopping in crowded shops. My second service user is currently 2months clean of acts or even thoughts of self-harm.