



Resources for Supporting Mental Health

Among Young People
in Slovenia



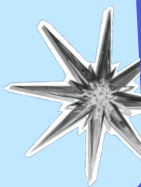
Youth Leadership
Programme

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

What is Mental Health?



Explore a simple but essential way of thinking about mental health, not as something you have or don't have, but as something that moves and changes throughout your life.



Where to find support



Looking for resources to help yourself, a friend, or a family member? You can find various resources, such as helplines, organisations and websites here.



Key Insights



Curious about the mental health landscape in your country? Find out what young people actually need most and the biggest challenges to getting help.



About the Project



Discover more about the Youth Leadership Programme, funded by the Rare Impact Fund, and how youth leaders have created this resource in partnership with Mental Health Europe.



This reference guide was developed by Youth Ambassador Tjaša Gaberc as a part of the Youth Leadership Programme. The document is a product of co-creation, researched and drafted by Youth Leaders with the guidance and editorial oversight of Mental Health Europe. The views and content expressed reflect the national perspectives, contributions, and lived experiences of these Youth Leaders.

LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear reader,

My name is Tjaša and I welcome you to this brief guide to resources and tools addressing youth mental health.

Mental health is just as important, if not more important, than physical health. If we don't act proactively, mental health challenges can quickly turn into a crisis. Although we are seeing slow destigmatization, there is still a great deal of fear surrounding this topic. According to a 2023 mental health study, in more than 50% of cases in Slovenia, mental health conditions are still perceived as incurable. ([Mental Health Report 2023](#))

But is this really the case?

The reality is that there are many effective resources available that can help us improve our mental health. This document is my attempt to guide you through these resources; however, each individual must find their own path and write their own story.

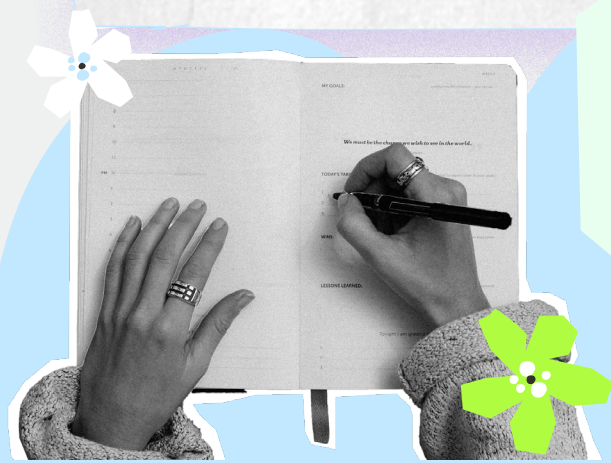
The resources that work for you will vary depending on many personal factors. However, I hope this resource guide can offer some concrete starting points. I have gathered resources available in Slovenia and accessible in the national language. While the main target group is young people aged 12–25, many of these resources can be useful beyond that age range as well.

That's why it's important for you to know that you are not alone. Even though fear is still present, there are people including myself who see you, understand you, and want to help you. This guide is a small step in that direction, an invitation to start exploring, seek support, and perhaps also open up a conversation.

Tjaša Gaberc

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WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

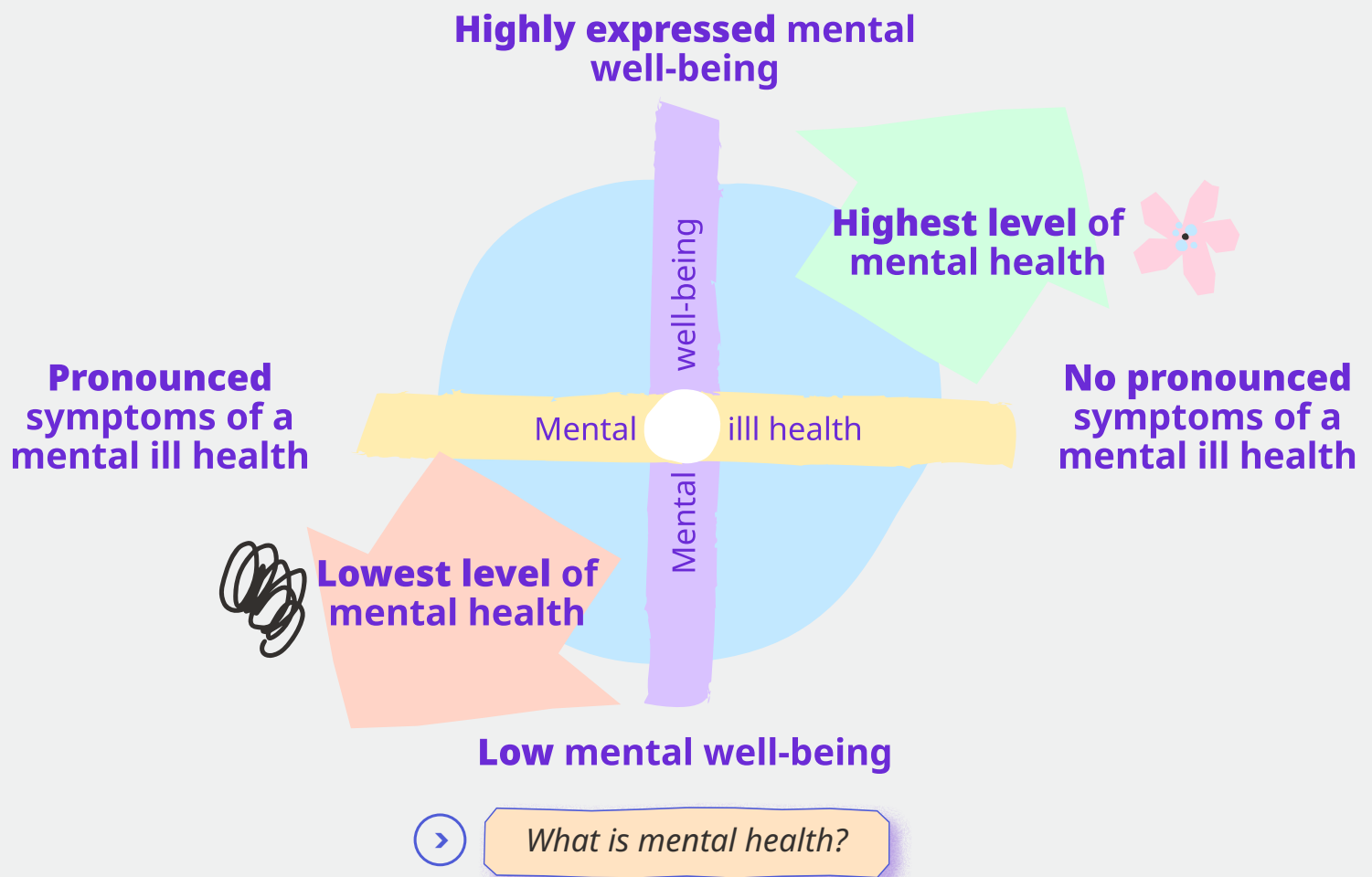
I won't give a strict definition of what mental health is because, to me, it is much more than words can fully describe. If you're looking for a formal definition, the World Health Organization (WHO) provides a good one. The main idea, however, is simple: **mental health is a form of health. It is connected to your body, your well-being, and how you live and function in society. It matters, and it should not be ignored.**

Most importantly, mental health is not something you either "have" or "don't have." Sometimes it can reach a point where professional support is helpful, such as therapy, counselling, or medication. But even without a diagnosis, that doesn't automatically mean everything is fine or that mental health should be neglected.

One way to think about mental health is as a line. The left side represents the most difficult moments, and the right side represents feeling well. Throughout life, we move along this line, sometimes gradually, and sometimes jumping forward or backwards, even within a single day.



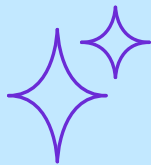
Experts have even added more dimensions to this idea, turning the line into something closer to a graph, which can start to look like a bit of a mathematical coordinate-system nightmare (interesting to read, I promise). You can explore these newer models and definitions in more detail if you're curious.



The key point is simple: mental health is more like a line or graph than a switch. Because it moves and changes, we can also influence where we are on it. Taking care of yourself and asking for help when you need it are part of that process.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND SUPPORT

Disclaimer: This paper is a personal recommendation based on my own experience and three interviews I have conducted. It is intended for informational purposes only and does not diagnose or treat any disease or mental health condition. **Please avoid self-diagnosing and consult a qualified professional if you think you may need support.** Seeking help is okay, even if it can feel difficult. Many people describe reaching out as one of the hardest steps. Professional support is available, and you do not have to go through things alone. **If something feels like an issue to you, please know that your experience and feelings are valid.**



Power of Personal Experience and Connections



Youth-led initiatives and peer support



Crisis Helplines and Counselling Support



Digital tools and apps



National information and mental health resources



Power of Personal Experience and Connections

One thing that's often overlooked, but is incredibly important (for me, maybe the most important), is **finding your people**. A community where you feel like you belong. That community can be anything: a chess club, a Minecraft server, a music band, sports, or even a random capybara lovers' Instagram account you love. Online or offline doesn't matter. What matters is **feeling connected to others**. Humans are social beings, even if we don't always like to admit it.

Of course, try to stay away from communities built around anything that could harm you or others. But in general, being around the right people can completely change how you feel. Sometimes you don't even realise how badly you're being treated until someone treats you with basic respect and kindness. **Changing your environment matters**. Being part of a community, campaigns, humanitarian works, youth actions, school events, knowledge-sharing, talks, or just content that makes you feel seen can help you realise that you're not alone.

I also want to mention **pets**. Sorry to all the cats and dogs and hamsters that never agreed to be our therapists, but they still help more than we can give them credit for. Check out the therapy work with dogs by Tačke Pomagačke.



Tačke Pomagačke

Personal stories matter too; hearing someone else talk honestly about their experience can make you feel understood and less alone.





Crisis Helplines and Counselling Support

We all experience ups and downs in our mental health. Feeling distressed doesn't automatically mean you have a mental health issue. However, getting a diagnosis can take time, and that can delay treatment. Sometimes it's also hard to immediately connect with a professional, and that can lower motivation to keep trying. That's why encouragement and support matter, especially in difficult moments.

Crisis helplines are here for exactly this reason. On the other end of the line are trained professionals whose job is to listen, support you, and help you feel safer. **You don't have to be in "serious enough" trouble to call.** If you feel overwhelmed, stuck, or alone, reach out. Make the call, send the message.

CRISIS HELPLINES



TOM Helpline

11 61 11: Free helpline for children and young people providing emotional support and counselling. This number is available every day from 12PM to 8PM.

Samarijan / Sopotnik Helpline

11 61 23: Free 24/7 helpline providing emotional support for people experiencing distress.



Klic v duševni stiski

01 520 99 00: Night-time crisis helpline for people experiencing emotional distress. This number is available from 7PM to 7AM.



SOS Helpline

Is a 24-hour confidential helpline for women and children who are victims of domestic and intimate partner violence.

NETWORK OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING CENTRES



POSVET Counselling Centres

Free psychological counselling sessions for young people aged 14–18 in several Slovenian cities.

➔ **031 70 47 07:** Idrija, Ljubljana, Kranj, Portorož, Slovenj Gradec, Zagorje ob Savi (This number is available Monday-Friday from 8AM to 8PM)

➔ **031 77 87 72:** Celje (This number is available Monday-Thursday from 10AM to 6PM and on Friday from 10AM to 3PM)

You can find information about phone numbers and locations for adults on their website.



University Counselling Centre

Psychological counselling service for students in Ljubljana.



Centers for Child and Adolescent Mental Health

At the Centers for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CDZOM), professional support and assistance are available to children, adolescents, and their parents who need help coping with difficulties or maintaining and strengthening mental health.

➔ List of centers per region is [available here](#).
More help-lines (including the ones for adults) can be [found here](#).



National information and mental health resources

I have already mentioned some nationally funded resources that can be trusted and where you can find a lot of useful information, especially if you enjoy reading more about the topic.



MIRA

National Programme for Mental Health in Slovenia providing information about mental health, support services, and initiatives aimed at strengthening mental wellbeing across the country.



National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ)

Provides educational resources, guidance on mental wellbeing, and information on available mental health services in Slovenia.



Ministry of Health

Mental Health and Dementia Sector – Government portal with information on national mental health policies, programmes, and initiatives.



Youth-led initiatives and peer support

Young people are experts in their own experience and often combine that with solid knowledge. They can present topics in a way that's easier to understand, more engaging, and more accessible for young audiences.



To Sem Jaz – Kaj lahko naredim, da mi bo lažje

One of the largest youth mental health guidance manuals in Slovenia. It includes interactive QR codes and practical tips for coping with everyday challenges. It is supported by the National Institute for Public Health, Slovenian Ministry of Health, National Institute for Mental Health and the European Union.





Kako si?

Instagram initiative run by psychology students raising awareness about mental health and encouraging open conversations.



Mind the Mind

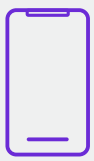
International mental health awareness programme led by medical students that focuses on reducing stigma.



V Odsevu

Initiative by medical students aiming to reduce stigma around mental health through conversations and awareness campaigns.





Digital tools and apps

Apps can be a strong form of support. When they're professionally designed, they can offer daily help and support you in dealing with everyday challenges. For many young people, more interactive and youth-friendly resources, like apps, digital tools, or interactive maps, are easier to use and feel more natural than traditional support.



Bo Mind

The first mental health app developed in Slovenia, designed to support emotional wellbeing and everyday coping strategies.



Interactive Map of Mental Health Support

Online map showing where and how to find different types of mental health support across Slovenia.



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centers

Interactive map for child and adolescent mental health centers.



Psychological First Aid Guide

Practical guidance on how to support someone experiencing emotional distress.

There are a lot of mental health resources out there, and it can be confusing to know what to trust. Information from national institutions like NIJZ or MIRA (National Programme for Mental Health) is reliable. Other sources might not always be accurate, and misinformation is common. However, if something helps you and doesn't harm you or others, it can still be worth trying to explore.

What works for you depends on many things: who you are, how old you are, how you're feeling, where you live, and what you're comfortable with. The more you search, the more options you'll find, and that can feel overwhelming. There is no "one right way" to take care of your mental health. Everyone is different.

Something that helps your friend might not help you, and that doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. But every attempt counts, even if it doesn't work out. At least you are ruling something out, but I promise, sooner or later, you will find something for yourself.

No, thanks, I am not gonna run a marathon in 3 weeks, even if you pay me, sorry.



There are many initiatives in place; however, the real challenge is how to get the information to young people. Are the available resources truly youth-friendly and accessible? And do new resources, including this paper, take into account the digitalisation of the world we live in?

As mental health awareness grows, another challenge appears: overthinking and self-diagnosing. You don't need a label or a formal diagnosis to ask for help or start taking care of yourself. Support should be available without needing to fit into a category.



Young people should also have a stronger voice in shaping mental health support. Your experiences matter, and you should be involved not only as users of services but also in designing them.

Digital spaces are also important. Sometimes looking for information on your phone or online feels more private and less visible, which can make it easier to take that first step.



KEY INSIGHTS



Mental health issues are more common than many people think.

Researchers estimate that more than one-third of people



in Europe experience mental health issues at some point in their lives.

What's even more important is when these issues appear.



Half of mental health issues develop by the age of 14



and about three-quarters start before the age of 24



What is mental health?

AWARENESS IS GROWING, BUT THE SYSTEM IS UNDER PRESSURE

In Slovenia, awareness around mental health increased a lot after the COVID-19 pandemic. People talk about it more openly now, which is definitely a positive change. But the healthcare system is struggling to keep up with the growing demand. The focus is still mostly on treatment rather than prevention, and there simply aren't enough professionals available. This means that even though more people are asking for help, getting that help is not always easy.

WAITING TIMES CAN BE EXTREMELY LONG

One of the biggest problems is waiting time. When you're young and going through big life changes, waiting months or even years for support can feel impossible. For example, waiting times for a first clinical psychological assessment can vary hugely depending on where you live. In Maribor the waiting time can be around five months, while in Novo mesto it can reach more than four years. For many young people, that's longer than an entire phase of their life.



WHERE YOU LIVE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Access to support also depends a lot on location. Cities usually have more services and more information about mental health. Rural areas often have fewer resources and fewer professionals. There are also differences in how mental health is discussed. In smaller communities, people may worry more about what others will think, which can make it harder to ask for help.

STIGMA STILL EXISTS

Even when support exists, not everyone feels comfortable using it. Some young people avoid school counselling services or other local options because they are worried about privacy or judgment. This doesn't mean the services are bad; it just shows that stigma still plays a role, especially in smaller communities.

THINGS ARE SLOWLY IMPROVING

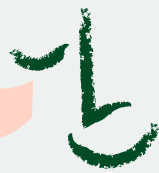
The good news is that things are changing. Mental health is talked about more than before, and new initiatives and resources are appearing. Slowly but surely, the topic is becoming more visible and less taboo.



WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?



Mental health challenges are common, especially during adolescence and young adulthood. But knowing that you are not alone and that support exists can make a big difference. Even if the system is not perfect yet, awareness is growing, and more people are working to make mental health support easier to access. And sometimes the first step is simply starting the conversation.



MOVING FORWARD

I know from personal experience how complex the healing process can be. Severe trauma can accumulate over the years, and healing also takes time. However, I hope that here you might find a resource or two that can help you start somewhere.

As said before, any start is a good start. The worst thing is not trying. Through failures, you can learn a lot. Talk to someone. Listen to people with personal experience.

I personally trust the resources listed here. They are not the only ones. There are many more tools available that might simply not be widely used yet or are not well promoted. Be bold, experiment, and don't blame yourself if you don't find the right thing immediately.

You are not responsible for the things that happened to you, but you are still in control of finding what works for you and how you want to approach it.

There are good resources available, including many created by young people. Trust experts, but most importantly, trust yourself. Your feelings are valid. **Keep going and find your way.**

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Youth Leadership Programme is funded by **Rare Impact Fund** to amplify the voice of young people within Mental Health Europe and beyond, fostering a movement of young leaders who drive cultural and social change. By transforming the narrative around mental health, young leaders will challenge stigma and advocate for tangible support in schools, care settings, and the wider community.

Active participation of young people in policy development and sociopolitical processes is essential for building a just and equitable society where everyone's mental health can thrive. For 2025–2026, the project will focus on implementing various engagement activities led by youth leaders at both European and local levels, with the goal of supporting the mental health of children and young people aged 12–25.

This infosheet is part of the Youth Leadership Programme and focuses specifically on Slovenia. It aims to map youth-friendly, low-barrier (peer and community) mental health support offers, helping young people find services that feel accessible, non-judgemental, and easy to reach.



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