



Someone to talk to

RNIB Emotional
Support Service

RNIB

supporting blind and
partially sighted people

Introduction

If you have lost or are losing your sight, you may be worried about how you will cope. Or you may feel depressed about the changes you are facing. Perhaps you are experiencing feelings of sadness, anger or anxiety and this is affecting you on a day-to-day basis. Or maybe it's causing you to worry about the future.

During these times, many people find it helpful to talk through their feelings with someone outside their usual circle of family and friends.

If you are supporting a person with sight loss, you may also experience these feelings and need someone to talk to.

Our Emotional Support Service (ESS) offers confidential telephone support and counselling to help you get through these times.

About us

We are a team of telephone counsellors with extensive experience in support, information and counselling. We will offer you:

- time to talk about your situation and how you're feeling
- one-to-one telephone support and counselling as well as telephone support groups, so that you can talk things over in more depth with the same person.



RNIB's Emotional Support Service is committed to a working practice that values equality and diversity. Sight loss does not discriminate and neither do we.

About the telephone counselling and support

Your counsellor will discuss and agree the number of sessions with you – commonly up to eight sessions.

Once we have your details, we will contact you to arrange a telephone appointment with one of our counsellors. We aim to make contact with you within five working days of receiving your details, although it may take longer at busy times, or if it is difficult to contact you.

The first appointment offers you an opportunity to talk about your situation and to explore what further support you might find helpful.

If you go on to have counselling or emotional support from our service, these appointments will be arranged at mutually convenient times and will always be with the same counsellor.



Although we do not have a crisis line, or offer befriending or face-to-face counselling, we can give information about other services and help in contacting them. If you need to speak to someone urgently, Samaritans are available 24 hours by telephone on 0845 790 9090.

“ At the beginning I felt as though I was going round and round a roundabout and couldn’t find the way off. By the end of counselling, I had found an exit onto a road I wanted – I had taken back control of my life and am in charge of my own decisions.”

About the telephone support groups

Sometimes you might find it helpful to explore ways forward in your life within a small group of people in a similar situation. In a supportive setting, you will be able to:

- talk about the way you feel
- share your experiences with others in similar circumstances
- explore what is not working for you and how to make it work
- improve and learn ways of dealing with difficult feelings related to sight loss.

The support groups usually run for eight weekly meetings over the phone. There will be a maximum of five people participating and each session will last about an hour.

An RNIB counsellor will be your group facilitator and will help you to share and explore your experiences in a safe way. Every week the facilitator will get in touch with each participant over the phone. Once everybody is contacted the meeting will begin. Your phone number is confidential to the Emotional Support Service and no one else will have access to it.

We do not offer long term support or befriending. If you want to join a telephone social group we can direct you to the RNIB befriending scheme run by our Talk and Support Service.

If you would like to join one of our support groups a counsellor will contact you to explain in more detail what the group is about and when the next one is going to run. This call will be a chance to discuss your individual circumstances and establish whether this type of support is appropriate for you.

“It has been a wonderful experience. I hope other people will have a chance to participate in these groups so that they will know they are not the only one and you can talk it through with others.”

Confidentiality

Our service is completely confidential. This means that what you say to us will remain within the Emotional Support Service and will not be passed on to anyone else without your consent.

The only exception to this is if we have very serious concerns about your safety or that of others. In such exceptional circumstances we might need to ensure your safety, but would strive to discuss this with you and assist you in seeking emergency support. We adhere to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework and comply with the Data Protection Act.



Getting in touch

You can get in touch with our Emotional Support Service by calling the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999. Your contact details will be passed onto us.

You can email us directly at ess@rnib.org.uk.

If you need to, you can talk to us using Type Talk or Language Line.

No cost

There is no cost to you for the service or the calls because we call you at appointment times.

Further information

RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the support, advice and products you need. We'll help you to find out what's available in your area and beyond, both from RNIB and other organisations.

t: 0303 123 9999

helpline@rnib.org.uk

Emotional Support Service

ess@rnib.org.uk

Other contact details

Samaritans

t: 0845 790 9090

samaritans.org

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

t: 01455 883 300

bacp.co.uk

“It gave me an opportunity to talk to somebody not involved. The counsellor had a gentle approach and was very understanding. She allowed me to work through my problems and made me feel at ease.”

“I’m amazed at what I could tell him, but I have no regrets. He provided a catalyst to deeper thinking – like having been locked in a room and then opening the door onto a fresh room.”

RNIB Helpline

0303 123 9999

helpline@rnib.org.uk

**If you, or someone you know, is
living with sight loss, we're here
to help.**

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