

Skin Support Resources

Good morning, and I hope that you are all feeling ok, and taking care of your skin and your mental wellbeing.

I thought that it might be useful to put together a post with all the online resources available to us when, or if, we struggle with our vitiligo, and are finding it hard to manage.

Summer makes things much more visible and this can bring its own challenges, when it's hot and you are trying to balance your ability to handle a lot of staring, or comments with staying cool in short sleeves or shorts.

First of all, if you are finding things really hard, please seek urgent help from your GP or if the surgery isn't open, use the Samaritans or Mind by phone if you're feeling very low.

Please don't feel that you 'should' feel better about yourself, or that it's 'only' vitiligo. The impact your skin condition has on you, on your social relationships or work, can be disproportionate to the size of any patches you may have, and whilst there is a terrible attitude in the UK towards any mental health issues, that you can 'pull yourself together' or that it isn't as bad as... whatever the condition may be, actually living with it is a different story.

These are some resources that may be of help. Again, if you are experiencing serious distress please urgently get in touch with either a helpline like the Samaritans available 24/7 or with your GP. The Samaritans can be called on **116 123**.

In the UK you are now able to self-refer to mental health services, such as face-to-face or online counselling, through IAPT. More information can be found here:
<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

The British Association of Dermatologists has a website with resources to give people support with different skin diseases:
www.skincaretrust.org.uk

Changing Faces provides support through camouflage appointments, and you may be able to self-refer to these through their website, and through a helpline:
<https://www.changingfaces.org.uk/adviceandsupport>

The Centre for Appearance Research has an online resource to work through, and which gives you some new ideas for coping with a changed appearance:
<http://www.faceitonline.org.uk>

The charity Mind provides a toolkit of online resources for mental wellbeing here:
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/online-mental-health/online-mental-health-tools/#.XUkkJy2ZNTY>

Many people find meditation, or mindfulness, to be a way of changing their thinking about themselves and some guided meditations can be found here:
<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en>

There are also two books that may be of help, though many others exist, and you may find a different approach more helpful to your experience of your vitiligo.

The first is **The Happiness Trap (Based on ACT: A revolutionary mindfulness-based programme for overcoming stress, anxiety and depression)** by Dr Russ Harris and the second is **Reasons to Stay Alive Paperback** by Matt Haig. Both are available at bookshops and on Amazon.

Look after yourself and please remember that if you feel really low and are worried at how much your vitiligo is affecting you, talk to your GP or health professional, or seek help. It's ok for you to be affected by it, and with support and help you can feel better again.