

28 best mental health books to read in 2026

28 best mental health books to read in 2026 - Pan Macmillan - Web page link

Ali Roff Farrar shares the best mental health books for those looking to understand – and care for – their mental health.

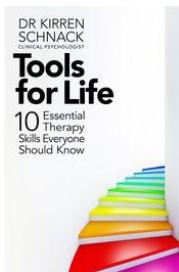


Looking for the best mental health books? Here, we round up our top books about mental health, [anxiety](#), depression and stress, from fascinating research to relatable page-turners and beautiful memoirs.

For those who want to understand how their minds work

Tools for Life

by [Kirren Schnack](#)

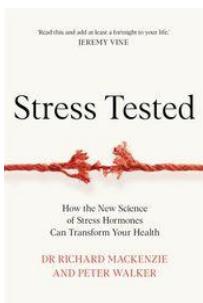


Buy the book

Dr Kirren Schnack outlines ten essential therapeutic skills you need to know in order to embrace the life you want and deserve. Dr Kirren shares powerful ways to understand yourself: how your attachment style, childhood, trauma and personality shape the way you think, feel, and relate. Her practical tools will help you understand why you feel stuck, stop people-pleasing, build healthy boundaries and heal past pain. Discover how to live with clarity, confidence and balance.

Stress Tested

by [Dr Richard Mackenzie](#)

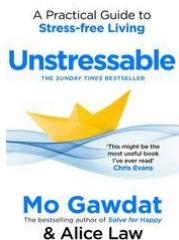


Buy the book

Why do we feel stress? And how can we change things? *Stress Tested* is a pioneering collaboration between leading researcher Richard Mackenzie and journalist Peter Walker. Investigating the science of stress hormones, real-life case studies, the history of stress, societal factors and how they interact with stress, Mackenzie and Walker explain exactly how stress works, and what we can do to mitigate its long-term health impact. This is the book exploring the nuances of stress and how it affects you.

Unstressable

by [Mo Gawdat](#)

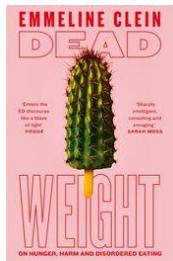


Buy the book

Unstressable applies Mo Gawdat's brilliant engineering mind and Alice Law's psychology and stress-management expertise to the 'stress pandemic'. This follow up to bestselling *Solve For Happy* will show you that chronic stress is not an unavoidable part of modern life, but a predictable – and therefore preventable – response, often as much to do with negative thought patterns as external circumstances. Practical exercises will help you build up the skills to manage stress, backed up by neuroscience and accessible psychology.

Dead Weight

by [Emmeline Clein](#)

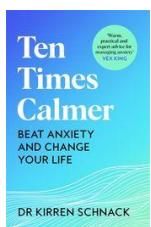


Buy the book

Emmeline Clein takes her own experiences, alongside those of other women, to follow the medical and cultural history of eating disorders. In writing that's electric, fierce and endlessly curious, Clein investigates the economic conditions underpinning our eating disorder epidemic, grapples with the myriad ways disordered eating has affected her own friendships and romantic relationships, and illuminates how today's feminism has been complicit in disordered eating culture. Through it all, she challenges the accepted narratives women absorb every day about themselves, revealing the dangerous messages that connect female worth to inhabiting an ever-smaller form.

Ten Times Calmer

by [Kirren Schnack](#)



Buy the book

Dr Kirren Schnack is here to tell you that your anxiety isn't here to stay. As an Oxford-trained and practicing NHS clinical psychologist with twenty years' experience, she offers a first aid kit of tools to help you understand what you're going through and change how you're feeling — and it might just be easier than you think. The ten chapters cover everything from dealing with anxious thoughts and stress to managing uncertainty and safely tackling trauma, with each tip taking you one step closer to an anxiety-free life.

That Little Voice In Your Head

by [Mo Gawdat](#)



Buy the book

Mo Gawdat's *That Little Voice in Your Head* is a practical guide to rewiring your brain for joy. He reveals that by talking down the negative voice within, we can change the way we think, turn greed into kindness, transform apathy into compassionate action and create our own happiness. Gawdat's brain exercises draw on his experience as a former Google engineer and Chief Business Officer, as well as from his neuroscience studies. And he explains how – despite their complexity – our brains generally behave in predictable ways. Drawing inspiration from the life of his late son, Gawdat has written a manual for happiness that is steeped in empathy.

On Agoraphobia

by [Graham Caveney](#)



Buy the book

In his early twenties, Graham Caveney began to experience strange symptoms and was eventually diagnosed with agoraphobia. For the following decades he had to manage his condition and live with various restrictions: no motorways, no dual carriageways, no shopping centres and limited time outdoors. In his efforts to understand his illness, Graham came back to his first love: reading. And he discovered that literature has plenty of examples of agoraphobics, from Harper Lee's Boo Radley to Ford Madox Ford, Emily Dickinson and Shirley Jackson. This is a fascinating if sometimes painful look at a disorder that escapes easy definition.

Books for those looking to find solace in creativity

The Green Sketching Handbook

by [Ali Foxon](#)



Buy the book

We all know that both creativity and time spent in the outdoors are beneficial for our mental health and general wellbeing. Many of us struggle to take time out and get away from our screens, but there is an answer! With its appealing combination of quick exercises with research on nature and creative activities, *The Green Sketching Handbook* will have you reaching for your pencil. Climate scientist and nature lover [Dr Ali Foxon](#) guides you to abandon fears of inadequacy, and create vivid depictions of your outdoor adventures.

[Start Painting Now](#)

by [Emily Powell](#)



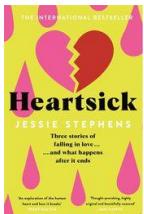
[Buy the book](#)

Start Painting Now is a practical, accessible guide to discovering your creative spirit, giving you brilliant new tools for relaxation and self-care. Instagram's favourite artist [Emily Powell](#) and her sister, doctor Sarah Moore, will guide you through the process of learning to ignore your inner critic and unwind from the stresses of daily life through painting. Supported by the latest research on the benefits of art for mental health and wellbeing, *Start Painting Now* will empower you to put aside the fear of failure, turn off your phone and throw yourself into the joy of creativity.

[Books for those navigating grief](#)

[Heartsick](#)

by [Jessie Stephens](#)



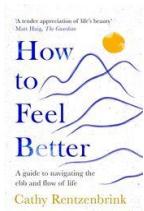
[Buy the book](#)

'Heartbreak does not seem to be a brand of grief we respect. And so we are left in the middle of the ocean, floating in a dinghy with no anchor, while the world waits for us to be okay again.'

Based on three true stories, *Heartsick* by Jessie Stephens is a compelling narrative non-fiction account of the many lows and occasional surprising highs of heartbreak. Bruising, beautiful, achingly specific but wholeheartedly universal, it reminds us that emotional pain can make us as it breaks us, and that storytelling has the ultimate healing power.

[How to Feel Better](#)

by [Cathy Rentzenbrink](#)



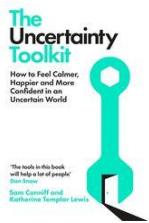
[Buy the book](#)

While we can't control all the ups and downs of life, we can choose how we respond to them. But rather than instructing us on how to live, Cathy Rentzenbrink approaches this book with warm, gentle guidance and offers comfort for those times we need it most. She covers topics such as her etiquette for bad news and the words of wisdom she would like to pass onto her son in a characteristically compassionate tone. *How to Feel Better* is essential reading for anyone looking to make sense of a big upheaval, or those simply navigating the daily ebbs and flows of life.

Books for those who want to tackle difficult emotions

The Uncertainty Toolkit

by [Sam Conniff](#)



Buy the book

It's the 'Do you have five minutes?' message from your boss. The 'We need to chat' from a loved one. Those spiralling thoughts at 3 a.m. and buzz of yet another breaking news alert. The potential coming waves of AI, climate change and unstable governments. For most of us, uncertainty is paralysing. But learning to navigate it effectively means more confidence, less anxiety and deeper connection with others. This is a pioneering, evidence-based guide to doing just that; a detailed, practical blueprint that will help anyone turn unpredictability into personal and professional growth.

How to Winter

by [Kari Leibowitz](#)



Buy the book

Do you struggle to stay positive in winter? Do you dread the long nights and dark skies that come with autumn's clock change? Do you find endless grey skies, drizzle and cold difficult to deal with? Dr. Kari Leibowitz sets out evidence-based strategies to help you learn not only to accept the chillier months, but even to embrace them, offering practical, easy-to-follow advice to transform your experience of wintertime. What's more, she sets out how techniques used for shifting our mindsets around winter can also be used to cope with times of emotional difficulty.

Already counting down to the return of British Summer Time? Here's how to embrace the darkness of winter

[Read more](#)

How to Stay Sane

by [Philippa Perry](#)

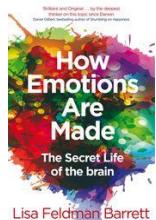


[Buy the book](#)

There is no simple set of instructions that can guarantee sanity, but if you want to overcome emotional difficulties and become happier, psychotherapist Philippa Perry, argues that there are four cornerstones to sanity you can influence to bring about change. By developing your self-observation skills, examining how you relate to others, breaking out of your comfort zone and exploring new ways of defining yourself, Philippa demonstrates that it is possible to become a little less tortured and a little more fulfilled.

How Emotions Are Made

by [Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)

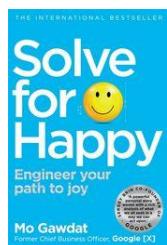


[Buy the book](#)

What if our emotions weren't pre-programmed in our brains and bodies? That's what Lisa Feldman Barrett asks in her book *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*. She instead argues that most of what we believe about emotions is wrong. Understanding where your own emotional responses stem from and how they appear in your own body is an intriguing concept. 'It doesn't mean that emotions are an illusion, or that bodily responses are random,' says Lisa. 'It means that on different occasions...the same emotion category involves different bodily responses. Variation, not uniformity, is the norm.'

Solve For Happy

by [Mo Gawdat](#)



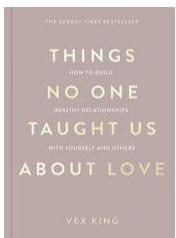
[Buy the book](#)

Mo Gawdat tackles the problem of how to be happy using his engineering training, coming up with an equation for lasting happiness. When his son died, it became Mo's mission to spread his happiness principles, and he has bottled those in this book. An answer to one of life's great challenges, his message and methods will offer solace and a new way of looking at the world.

Mental health books for those who might be feeling alone

Things No One Taught Us About Love

by [Vex King](#)

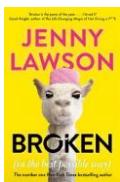


[Buy the book](#)

The hope and expectation that romantic love can and will be the solution to all our problems can put real strain on our relationships. Learn how to strengthen them and uncover the true nature of love – a force within us, rather than an external power – with Vex King. By deconstructing the myths and misconceptions surrounding love and relationships, this book will help you to understand yourself, create and maintain healthy habits, set boundaries and heal.

Broken

by [Jenny Lawson](#)

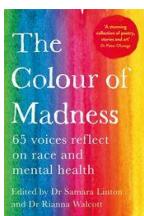


[Buy the book](#)

As Jenny Lawson's hundreds of thousands of fans know, she suffers from depression. In *Broken*, Jenny humanizes what we all face in an all-too-real way, reassuring us that we're not alone and making us laugh while doing it. We see how her vacuum cleaner almost set her house on fire, how she was attacked by three bears, and why she can never go back to the post office. Of course, Jenny's long-suffering husband Victor, the Ricky to Jenny's Lucille Ball, is present throughout. A treat for Jenny Lawson's already existing fans, and destined to convert new ones, *Broken* is a beacon of hope and a wellspring of laughter when we all need it most.

The Colour of Madness

by [Samara Linton](#)

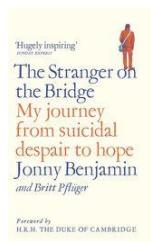


[Buy the book](#)

The Colour of Madness brings together memoirs, essays, poetry, short fiction and artworks by people of colour who have experienced difficulties with mental health. From experiencing micro-aggressions to bias, and stigma to religious and cultural issues, people of colour have to fight harder than others to be heard and helped. Statistics show that people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK experience poor mental health treatment in comparison to their white counterparts and are more likely to be held under the Mental Health Act. For more inspiring reads take a look at our top [books about mental health](#).

[The Stranger on the Bridge](#)

by [Jonny Benjamin](#)

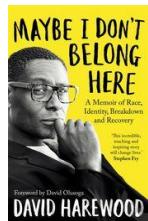


[Buy the book](#)

What does it feel like to lose all hope, and find it again? That's what Johnny Benjamin shares in his brave memoir *The Stranger on the Bridge: My Journey from Suicidal Despair to Hope*, which tells the story of how he found himself standing atop Waterloo Bridge, ready to jump when a stranger saw him and intervened. Years later, Johnny took on the monumental task of trying to find the stranger who saved his life. Johnny's story is one of hope – lost and then found. Including his struggles accepting and sharing his sexuality and his mental health struggles within his Jewish family and community, he shares a unique yet relatable story of mental health.

[Maybe I Don't Belong Here](#)

by [David Harewood](#)

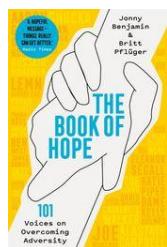


[Buy the book](#)

When [David Harewood](#) was twenty-three, his acting career began to take flight and he had what he now understands to be a psychotic breakdown. He was physically restrained by six police officers, sedated, then hospitalized and transferred to a locked ward. Only now, thirty years later, has he been able to process what he went through. In this powerful and provocative account of a life lived after psychosis, critically acclaimed actor, David Harewood, uncovers a devastating family history and investigates the very real impact of racism on Black mental health.

[The Book of Hope](#)

by [Jonny Benjamin](#)

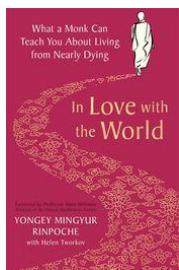


[Buy the book](#)

Award-winning mental health campaigner Jonny Benjamin, MBE, and co-editor Britt Pflüger bring together people from all walks of life – actors, musicians, athletes, psychologists and activists – to share what gives them hope. This joyful collection is a supportive hand to anyone looking to find light on a dark day and shows that, no matter what you may be going through, you are not alone. In this book, Johnny Benjamin brings together a range of voices to speak to the spectrum of our experiences of mental health and the power of speaking up and seeking help.

[In Love with the World](#)

by [Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche](#)



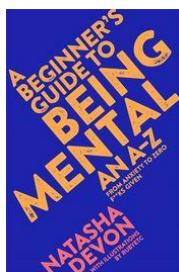
[Buy the book](#)

The moving story of meditation master Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche's journey into the wilderness and a near-death experience during his four-year wandering retreat is as inspirational as it is spiritual. Through Rinpoche's intimate account of his search for the self during his suffering, he demonstrates how we can transform a fear of death into a life filled with joy.

Books for those who have just discovered that they have 'mental health'

[A Beginner's Guide to Being Mental](#)

by [Natasha Devon](#)

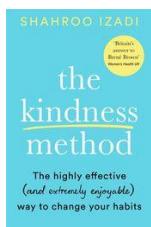


[Buy the book](#)

'We all exist somewhere within a spectrum of mental health.' Natasha's contribution to this list is a hilarious read which takes us on a journey through the alphabet of mental health, all the way from Anxiety, to ZERO FUCKS GIVEN (or the art of having high self-esteem), with a few pitstops at Drugs, Internet, Therapy and other useful themes connecting to mental health along the way. Sourcing expert advice along with her own laugh-out-loud personal experiences, this is observational comedy meets mental health advice, resulting in a sense that however you are feeling, whatever you're going through, you're not the only one.

[The Kindness Method](#)

by [Shahroo Izadi](#)

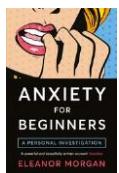


[Buy the book](#)

In these difficult times, we could all benefit from showing ourselves a little kindness. If you want to use this time to make a change, Behavioural Change Specialist Shahroo Izadi believes there's only one way to make change last, and that's to [be kind to yourself](#). The Kindness Method was developed through a combination of professional training and personal experience and will leave you feeling empowered, positive and ready to make a change, whether it's weight loss, cutting down on alcohol or improving your relationships.

[Anxiety for Beginners](#)

by [Eleanor Morgan](#)



[Buy the book](#)

'Anxiety itself is not a mental illness', explains Eleanor Morgan in her sharp book *Anxiety for Beginners: A Personal Investigation*. 'As part of our hardwiring as human beings, and what it means to be conscious, anxiety is a law of human nature. Natural selection gave us minds, and, with them, we were released from the shackles of biological determinism. But the power of the mind is a whole new set of chains because there's always something to be anxious about. We worry because that's what we've evolved to do.' This is a compilation of the writer's own experiences, curiously delved into and unpicked with relatable thoughtfulness.

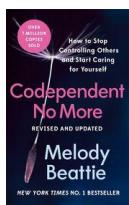
The 9 best books to help with anxiety

[Read more](#)

Books for chronic people pleasers

[Codependent No More](#)

by [Melody Beattie](#)

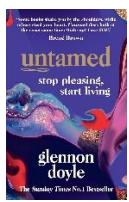


[Buy the book](#)

Have you lost sight of yourself while addressing the needs of others? Fully revised and updated, with a new chapter on trauma and anxiety, this modern classic – that has already sold over 7 million copies across the globe – will help you heal and grow. With personal reflections, exercises, and instructive stories drawn from Beattie's own life and the lives of those she's counselled, *Codependent No More* will help you break old patterns and maintain healthy boundaries, and offers a clear and achievable path to healing, hope, freedom and happiness.

Untamed

by [Glennon Doyle](#)



[Buy the book](#)

As a *New York Times* bestseller which has sold over one million copies and featured on lists including Oprah's *O Magazine* and Reese Witherspoon's Book Club, *Untamed* by activist Glennon Doyle had to get a mention in our list of top books about mental health. Centred around the theme of learning to listen inwardly in order to find yourself, Glennon explores the peace and happiness to be found in shedding the pressures of the external expectations around us. Sharing her own personal story of how, when and why she decided to stop pleasing others, this is a powerful memoir, and a wakeup call to start living for ourselves.