

# Talking tips

Talking to people about mental health can hugely benefit both parties, but we know that having these conversations, especially if you have never done so before, isn't always easy. There is no right or wrong way to talk about mental health but we've created these tips to support you with those conversations.



## Think about the time and place

Pick an environment where you feel comfortable and where you can talk without distractions.

Sometimes it's easier to talk side by side rather than face to face, so perhaps you could go for a walk in the local park or have a chat while doing another activity such as making a cup of tea or cooking.

## Listen and ask questions

Make sure you give your undivided attention and listen actively when someone is talking. Let them finish their sentences and thoughts without interrupting and encourage them to talk by asking open rather than leading questions, for example you could say "Why don't you tell me how you are feeling?" rather than "I can see you are feeling very low". Try to keep your language neutral and give the person time to answer.

## Let them share as much or as little as they want to

Let them lead the discussion at their own pace and don't pressure them to tell you anything they aren't ready to talk about. Talking can take a lot of trust and courage and you might be the first person they have been able to talk to about this.

## Don't change the way you treat them

If someone opens up to you about a mental health problem it's important to remember that they are the same person and won't want to be treated any differently. Do what you usually do – behaving differently can make someone feel more isolated.

## Know your limits

You will have your own limits on the support that you can provide and it's important to take care of yourself too. Give yourself time to rest and process what they have told you or what's happened. Try to help them create a support network of other friends, relatives and mental health professionals who can help them too.

## You don't have to have all the answers

Try not to make assumptions about what is wrong or jump in too quickly with your own diagnosis or solutions. The important thing is to listen rather than feeling like you need to fix anything, as this isn't always realistic and it can be more helpful to the other person if you just listen and offer your support, unless they've asked for advice directly.

## What to do if someone needs more help

If someone you know has mental health issues that are affecting their daily life, they may benefit from further support.

We have a page on our website filled with information on organisations and how to access support that you may find useful:

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-help](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-help)

