

Conversation Tips

Talking openly about mental health and suicide helps to reduce the stigma which prevents so many people from seeking help. If you suspect someone isn't feeling okay, ask them. By starting a conversation, you could change or save their life.

We know that talking to someone about mental health or suicide can feel awkward and uncomfortable. Here are some tips that may help:

Start a conversation

Starting a conversation is half the battle. Use open questions that allow them to talk more about how they are feeling. By being understanding there's a better chance that someone will want to talk. You may need to ask twice if they are ok and remember to think about where you are when you are chatting – pick a quiet spot if you can.

“Hey, I've noticed you haven't seemed yourself lately... how are you?”

Listen

Show them you care by paying attention and encouraging them to continue talking. Simply giving someone the space to talk and listening to how they're feeling can be very helpful. Remember to be non-judgmental and try to provide reassurance. Not knowing the answers doesn't mean you're not helping – you don't have to fix it.

“That sounds really tough. Tell me more.”

Encourage

Encourage the person to try self-help, lean on the people around them and seek professional help if they need to. You may feel out of your depth to help further, but there are plenty of people out there who can. Give them hope for recovery and maybe even offer to help.

“Do you have anyone else to talk to?”

Check in

Before you leave, agree another time soon to check-in with them, see how they are doing.

“Would you like to catch up again about this?”

Self-care

Having these conversations are tough. Make sure to take time out to look after yourself and find someone to talk to about your own feelings.

For discussions where someone mentions suicide

Be direct

Asking someone if they feel suicidal might not feel like the right thing to do, but research has shown that speaking openly about suicide decreases the likelihood of someone acting on their feelings. Ask them the question.

“Have you been thinking about suicide?”

Act

If you think a person is in immediate danger and cannot keep themselves safe or they have a plan and the means to end their life, do not leave them alone. Get urgent help immediately.

