



## **Talking About Mental Health**

### ***How do we talk to someone we are concerned about? How do we help rather than make things worse?***

We can often be really worried about someone but be very unsure as to how we can help them. What is most important when you think there is an issue is not to wait. If you spend time waiting and hoping that things will get better than you are wasting valuable time in getting them support.

Talking to someone is often the first step to take when you know they are going through a hard time. This way you can find out what is troubling them and what you can do to help. Supporting a friend or family member is a key part of helping someone who is going through a mental illness.

### **Tips for talking about mental health**

#### **Set time aside with no distractions**

It is important to provide an open and non-judgemental space with no distractions. Give the person time and space to talk about how they are feeling. Sometimes just asking and listening can be helpful.

## **2. Let them share as much or as little as they want to**

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

## **3. Don't try to diagnose or second guess their feelings**

While you may be happy to talk and offer support, you aren't a trained counsellor or mental health professional. Try not to make assumptions about what is wrong or jump in too quickly with your own diagnosis or solutions.

However, you can talk to them about your concerns or things you may have noticed. Family and friends are often the first ones to notice when something is wrong.

## **4. Keep questions open ended**

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. Give the person time to answer and try not to grill them with too many questions.

## **5. Ask them what would help them.**

Ask the person with their experience is and what would help, rather than assuming what would help.



## **6. Avoid confrontation.**

It is important that these conversations occur where the person feels safe, and that as the concerned person you are prepared to listen and reflect rather than react

## **7. Talk about wellbeing**

Exercise, having a healthy diet and taking a break can help protect mental health and sustain wellbeing. Talk about ways of de-stressing and ask if they find anything helpful. Offer to join them for a walk, make a healthy meal etc

## **8. Listen carefully to what they tell you, be an active listener**

Repeat what they have said back to them to ensure you have understood it. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but by showing you understand how they feel, you are letting them know you respect their feelings.

## **9. Offer them help in seeking professional support and signposting to practical information or resources**

You might want to offer to go the GP with them, or help them talk to a friend or family member. Try not to take control and allow them to make decisions.

## 10. Know your limits

Think about what they are saying and if you need to encourage them to seek professional help.

If you believe they are in immediate danger or they have injuries that need medical attention, you need to take action to make sure they are safe.



### Where to get help

If you have concerns about the person's safety and that they may be at risk of self-harm or suicide then you can access support through the link below. This offers several services and supports that are available to anyone 24 hours a day.

### To access links set out below:

*Right click on the link and select open hyperlink this will bring you to the relevant site.*

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/help/>

Or

You can Text HELLO to 50808 any time day or night

Or

Visit [www.text50808.ie](http://www.text50808.ie)

Or

Freephone 116123

Below is a link to a video about the benefits of talking to someone you are worried about and how effective talking to them can be on their road to recovery.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd25oIL78ko>

If it is a family member or close friend you are concerned about, they might not want to talk to you. Try not to take this personally: talking to someone you love can be difficult as they might be worried they are hurting you. It is important to keep being open and honest and telling them that you care. It may also be helpful to give them information of organisations or people they can reach out to.

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

[www2.hse.ie](http://www2.hse.ie)



1. **Check in on friends**

2. **Listen and reflect**



3. **Ask questions**

