



MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATION STARTERS



Often time, people are at a loss about how to support a loved one going through stressful life events. Having mental health conversations can be very sensitive, and thus challenging to start. Here are a few tips to help you get that conversation started.

- I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?
- What can I do to help you?
- It is ok to keep things private, but did you want to tell me more about what you are going through?
- I am someone who cares and wants to listen. What do you want me to know about how you are feeling?
- Who or what has helped you deal with similar issues in the past?
- Sometimes talking to someone who has dealt with a similar experience helps. Do you know of others who have experienced these types of problems who you can talk with?
- It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help you to find help?
- Would you be open to learning more about your experience if I get some information?
- I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?
- Who are the people you feel safe with?
- Where is the place you feel safe the most?
- If you could change anything in your life, what would it be?
- What are you dreading the most this week?
- What are you worried about when you lie in bed and can't sleep?
- What difficulties are you facing?
- What are you looking forward to this week?
- How do you feel about things changing?
- When was the last time you were happy?
- What makes you feel calm?

When talking about mental health problems:

- Communicate in a straightforward manner
- Speak calmly at a level appropriate to the person's age and developmental level (e.g children)
- Ensure that you maintain confidentiality. Make this known to them, as it builds trust and confidence.
- Watch for reactions during the discussion and slow down or back up if the person becomes confused or upset
- Remain calm, nonjudgmental, and focused solely on helping the person recognize the need for immediate support.
- Be aware of your reactions and maintain no emotional attachment to their responses. A person's response may be due to the stress they are experiencing and not necessarily about you.
- The person maintains the right to self-determination. Do not get angry if they decide to take actions you disapprove of. Letting them know their options is the best you can do.
- Be open to being rejected. Some people find it hard acknowledging that they need help. Do not be discouraged by this rejection however. Pace yourself and try again at a later time.