

We know talking about mental health is not always easy. But starting a conversation doesn't have to be awkward, and being there for someone can make a huge difference.



It's important that conversations happen at times and in places that feel natural. Sometimes it's easier to talk about our feelings when we are doing something else. Driving in the car; jogging around the park; eating breakfast in the cafe. The more typical the setting, the less unusual and uncomfortable the conversation can feel. - Lauren

There is no right way to talk about mental health, but these tips will guide you to make sure you're approaching it in a helpful way.

1. Ask questions and listen

Asking questions can give the person space to express how they're feeling and what they're going through, and it will help you to understand their experience better. Try to ask questions that are open and not leading or judgemental – such as “how does that affect you” or “what does it feel like?”

2. Think about the time & place

Sometimes it's easier to talk side by side rather than face to face. So, if you do talk in person, you might want to chat while you are doing something else. You could start a conversation when you're walking, cooking or stuck in traffic. However, don't let the search for the perfect place put you off!

3. Don't try & fix it

It can be hard to see someone you care about having a difficult time but try to resist the urge to offer quick fixes to what they're going through. Learning to manage or recover from a mental health problem can be a long journey, and they've likely already considered lots of different tools and strategies. Just talking can be really powerful, so unless they've asked for advice directly, it might be best just to listen.

4. Treat them the same

When someone has a mental health problem, they're still the same person as they were before. And that means when a friend or loved one opens up about mental health, they don't want to be treated any differently. If you want to support them, keep it simple. Do the things you'd normally do.

5. Be patient

No matter how hard you try, some people might not be ready to talk about what they're going through. That's ok – the fact that you've tried to talk to them about it may make it easier for them to open up another time.

And there are lots of things you can do to support them even if you're not talking:

- Doing things together
- Sending a text to let them know you're thinking of them
- Offering to help with day-to-day tasks.