How to Talk About Mental Health

Changing Minds

Because every mind matters.

To have a conversation with someone about mental health may seem difficult or uncomfortable, but it is always better than doing nothing.

For a long time, no one really talked about mental illness. Through our Changing Minds initiative, we're working hard to change that. You can't help someone with a mental illness in any meaningful way without talking to them about it. That's why it's so important to have the courage to speak up.

Asking If Someone Is Okay

If you think someone is struggling, talk to them about it. It might be uncomfortable, but it can make a real difference — especially if they've been too afraid or embarrassed to reach out for help.

What You Can Say

> **"I've noticed that you've been _____. Is there anything you want to talk about?"**
>
> **I get the feeling you're having a tough time and I'm worried about you. What's going on?"**
>
> **It seems like you're going through a lot right now. Can we talk? Maybe I can help."**

When Someone Says They're Struggling

There's no perfect way to respond when someone tells you they're struggling. Just listening with an open mind can help them feel understood and supported.

What You Can Say

> **You're not alone in this. I may not understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."**
>
> **Asking for help is a sign of strength. Have you talked to your provider about this?"**
>
> **I'm here for you. What can I do to support you?"**

What Not to Say, And Why

Talking about mental health can be tough, even when you have the best intentions. Certain things that sound helpful, really don't help - they might make someone feel like you aren't taking their problems seriously.

Words to Avoid

> **I know exactly how you feel."**
>
> No one knows how anyone else feels, so this isn't a good way to make someone feel understood.
>
> **Hang in there, it will pass."**
>
> This is unhelpful as they've likely been feeling this way for some time, and it hasn't gotten better — that's why they're asking for support.
>
> **Don't be so negative. Think positive!"**
>
> If it were that simple, mental illness wouldn't exist. This statement implies that mental illness is a choice — which is false.

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