

**THE BIG
MENTAL HEALTH
GET TOGETHER**

Top Talking Tips

You might find yourself talking about mental health at your Get Together - after all, it's about connecting with others and supporting mental health.

So we've created this guide to help you have supportive conversations with others, be they relatives, friends or colleagues. We hope you find it helpful.

Having supportive conversations

Remember - having a supportive conversation does not mean you are there to solve someone's mental health problems. The person who has chosen to speak to you isn't expecting you to have the answers but rather provide a listening ear, and that's what's important.

Try to:

› Limit distractions

Consider when and where to talk. Ideally, you want to empower the other person and allow them to talk via a method they feel comfortable with. Also consider who else is around and can potentially overhear the conversation - if on the phone or online could you use headphones to chat to allow for greater privacy?

› Show empathy rather than sympathy

Empathic responses show that you're trying to see where the person is coming from, that you're trying to feel with them. Sympathy usually expresses pity. So better to say something like, 'That must be awful, I'm so sorry' rather than, 'I feel sorry for you'.

› Empower the person

Ask what they think would help rather than tell them what you think would help. At most, give information rather than advice. This makes it empowering.

Try not to:

› Ignore/Invalidate

There are obvious examples such as 'Cheer up', 'Man up' but sometimes we do this without realising by silver-lining situations or trying to make the person feel better. So if someone says they feel worthless and we respond, 'No you're not, don't be silly' we are invalidating what they have said. Instead, we need to acknowledge what they've said, something like: 'I'm sorry you feel that way, that must be awful. I don't see you that way.'

› Compare

Sometimes we can draw up a story comparing their situation to someone else's or your own. In some instances, this can show empathy, but it can also sometimes turn into you telling your story rather than listening to them. So think carefully before you start comparing their situation to someone else's - how relevant is this to the person?

› Assume you know the answer

What would help someone or what they want to happen will be different for everyone so don't assume that you know what the answer is. Nor should you try to 'fix' or give advice as your first response. You can signpost further down the line, but not right away. All you need to do is listen.

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Please consider yourself in all of this. If you have found a conversation difficult remember to debrief with someone else afterwards.

Top Talking Tips

If you are worried about a friend, family member or colleague...

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Don't wait for the perfect moment- there might never be one!

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.

Talk about yourself too! It could be as simple as sharing that you get down sometimes.

Give your full attention and listen without judgement!

Offer reassurance that you are there to listen and there is support available.

Asking twice is an important way of starting conversations about mental health and letting people know that you really are interested.

If you think someone has been acting differently it's OK to mention it in a kind way.

Ask what they think would help rather than tell them what you think would help. Give information rather than advice.

Facts that can help start a general conversation on mental health

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There are approximately 7.5 million people in the UK living with a diagnosed mental illness.

It is estimated that one in four of us experience a mental health problem every year.

An estimated 8.58 million adults in England alone will require mental health support for problems including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety.

Also, sharing ideas on how to relax is an interesting and helpful way to start a conversation about mental health. Not only could it prompt a colleague or friend to take a look at how they manage their wellbeing, you may also pick up some tips for yourself!

> The impact of Covid-19 on mental health

1 in 6 young people have a probable mental illness – up from 1 in 9 before the pandemic.

Mental Health UK's tips for good mental wellbeing

**Have a chat about
how you're feeling**



**Eat regular
meals and drink
lots of water**

**Give to a cause
you care about
or volunteer
your time**

Stay active

**Engage in a
creative activity**

If you need help

- Make an appointment with your GP
- Find out about your Employee Assistance Programme at work
- Visit Clic, our online community where you can speak safely and openly about how you're feeling and get mutual support from people who understand how it feels
- Call the Samaritans on 116 123
- If you or someone you know is in urgent need of life saving help please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.

