

## Talking About Mental Health

***Talking about your own mental health.*** Talking about mental health can be difficult. It is normal to worry about how people may react. But it is important to remember that talking to others may [benefit](#) your mental well-being—reminding you that you’re not alone and allowing loved ones to provide support and reassurance.

The following tips may help make the discussion easier:

- **Pick a method of communication** that feels right (face-to-face, over the phone, writing it down in a letter, etc.) and choose a location where you are comfortable.
- **Describe how you feel** using “I” statements. You can try this [template](#) if you don’t know where to start: *For the past \_\_\_\_, I have been feeling \_\_\_\_. I have struggled with \_\_\_\_. Telling you this makes me feel \_\_\_\_, but I’m telling you because \_\_\_\_. I would like \_\_\_\_.*
- **Suggest things they can do to help.** This could be anything—checking in with you, doing enjoyable activities together, or helping you make an appointment with a doctor or therapist.
- **Set boundaries.** Only share what you feel comfortable discussing and clarify whether you want them to give advice or just listen. If the conversation becomes unsupportive, you can say you’d like to take a break and talk later.

***Talking to others about their mental health.*** It can also be hard to broach the subject when someone you care about shows signs of poor mental health. Remember you don’t have to be an expert or know the perfect thing to say. Just having the conversation shows you care.

To start the conversation, express your concerns directly and compassionately. It can be helpful to **focus on things you’ve observed, such changes in mood or behavior.** For example:

*“I’ve noticed that you seem to be struggling lately. I’m worried about you. Can we go for a walk this weekend and talk?”*

*“I miss seeing you. It seems like you’ve been more withdrawn than usual. Is everything OK?”*

*“I was thinking about what you said about feeling overwhelmed and stressed. I wanted to let you know I’m here for you.”*

Here are some additional tips for talking to others about their mental health.

- **Go at their pace.** Listen more than you talk. Pay attention to their tone and body language. If they are not ready to open up, don’t take it personally. Reiterate that you are there for them whenever they want to talk.
- **Ask how you can help.** You can offer specific ideas (e.g., calling to check in, helping with errands) but don’t make demands. For example, instead of “you need to see a therapist,” you might ask “what do you think about the idea of going to therapy?”
- **Be supportive.** Validate their feelings. After the initial conversation, continue to check in, offer encouragement, and celebrate small wins. Treat them as a whole person by inviting them to social events and talking about other parts of your lives. Let them know how much they mean to you.
- **Accept what you can and cannot do.** Engage others for support and set boundaries as needed. Don’t expect that you will be able to “save” or “fix” them. Unless there is an immediate safety risk, people can’t be forced to accept help.