

Supporting Mental Wellness in Others

Every person falls somewhere on the mental health continuum, whether thriving, surviving, struggling, or in crisis. A person's mental health can shift and change throughout their life. It's important to remember that everyone is doing their best on any given day. When you recognize that someone seems off or doesn't appear to be themselves, consider checking in with them. While these conversations can be difficult, your willingness to ask, listen, and provide reassurance and information may be exactly what the individual needs to feel supported and possibly seek additional help.

Prepare for the conversation

- What observable signs/symptoms have you noticed?
 - Behavior (absenteeism or presenteeism, withdrawing from others or commitments)
 - Appearance (tired, unkept, disheveled clothing, cuts or bruises)
 - Feelings (sadness, worry, irritability, no longer enjoying work, increased self-criticism)
 - Thoughts (indecisiveness, difficulty concentrating, disengaged)
- What is your intention or goal of the conversation?
 - Do not make assumptions or diagnose.
- If the concern is brought to your attention by someone else, what other factors need to be considered?
 - Remind the person to respect the individual's privacy and resist discussing with others.
- Limit distractions (cell phones, watch notifications, interruptions).
- Find a quiet space to talk.
- Have tissues available, just in case.
- Be aware of where you are on the mental health continuum.
 - What could get in the way of an open conversation?

Approach the conversation

THE DO'S

- Practice empathy (Empathy is being with someone vs. telling your version of the same story.)
 - Be present and engaged in the conversation.
 - Use nonjudgmental active listening.
 - Listen to hear, not just to respond – this isn't your situation to fix.
 - Use reflection vs. telling the person how they feel.
 - Be genuine and respectful.
 - Respect the privacy of the individual.
 - Respect the culture of the individual.
 - Be OK with silence.
 - Be aware of your body language and facial expressions.

THE DON'TS

- Try to fix the situation.
- Give advice.
- Make promises you can't keep.
- Dismiss their problems or how they're feeling.
- Focus on *right* vs. *wrong*.
- Use *should* or *I would* statements.
- Minimize their experience and assume they aren't trying hard enough to be happy or feel better.
- Communicate in a belittling, sarcastic, or patronizing manner.

Ask open questions

- I've noticed...
- I wanted to check in with you...
- I'm wondering...
- Help me understand...
- Walk me through...
- I am working from these assumptions...
- Tell me more about what is going on...

If you notice any signs of deep despair or warning signs for risk of suicide, ask directly:

- Are you having thoughts of suicide?
- Do you have a plan?
- Do you have access to...[method of help]? (see below)

Reassure and give information

- What would be helpful to you?
- What can I do to support you?
 - Do not make promises that are not feasible.
- What are your thoughts about talking with someone?
 - Resources and methods of help:
 - Employee Assistance Program at work.
 - Ask a doctor for a referral to behavioral health.
 - Human Resources at work – FMLA, work accommodations.
 - County crisis line.
 - 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
 - Peer support (if applicable).

Follow-up

- Agree to check in with the person within an agreed-upon timeframe.

Explore more [Real Goals and Supplemental Resources](#)

For help to translate or understand this, please call (800) 279-1301. (TTY dial 711)

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