

LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

How to talk about Mental Health:

Anyone can experience mental health challenges.

Friends can make a genuine and positive difference in a person's recovery process by recognising the signs of mental health concerns and connecting them to support.

Talking to friends about mental health can be an opportunity to provide support, information, and guidance and learning about mental health can lead to:

- Greater understanding and compassion
- Recognising early signs of mental health concerns
- Earlier access to support and treatment

Learn the Signs:

You might not be certain your friend is displaying worrisome signs regarding their mental health. A few signs to look out for include being impulsive or more irritated than usual, behavioural changes (i.e., habits of how they dress, general appearance, eating or sleep habits, mood), talking about feelings of loneliness or despair, excessive worrying and trouble concentrating.

Start the Conversation:

Opening the door to a conversation is important. Find a moment to talk and consider meeting where they are comfortable - or just give them a call! Try one of these opening lines to make it easier:

- "Hi, how are you doing? - I've been worried. You haven't been yourself lately. Do you want to talk?"
- "I know you have been going through a lot. I am here for you."
- "If you are going through a difficult time, can I help you to find help?"
- "I want you to know I care, and I am here to listen."

During the Conversation:

When talking about mental health remember to communicate in a straightforward manner, watch for your friends reactions as you talk and slow down or back up if they become confused or upset. (It may be helpful to research how to connect people to resources before meeting with them.)

After the Conversation:

- It may take many conversations, but being willing to continue talking, listening, and just being there will help.
- Check in regularly to see how they're doing. This is often one of the best ways to help someone struggling with depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns.
- Reinforce any momentum, no matter how small, that your friend makes towards getting help. From small steps to giant leaps, all efforts should be positively reinforced.

Helpful Reminders:

Many mental health concerns are treatable and can come in a variety of ways:

- Having a conversation about mental health might be uncomfortable, but it can make an impact. Know the resources in your area so you can stay connected for yourself and your friends.
- Seeing a counsellor or therapist, or doctor of healthcare professional for medication.

