



Tips for having a conversation with someone in need

Adapted from SuperFriend

There's nothing to lose by having the conversation....

Having a conversation with someone right now doesn't just need to be about their mental health. We have all been impacted in one way or another, so just reaching out to see how a colleague, friend or family member is going is a great way to show compassion and kindness.

It can feel difficult to have the conversation – you may be worried about saying the wrong thing, making things worse, damaging the relationship or perhaps not knowing what to do. However, a conversation with good intentions is better than not saying anything at all.

There's everything to gain....

If you have noticed changes in someone's behaviour or have concerns for their mental health, talking to them can be an important first step in helping them seek support. You may also be the only person to have noticed changes in their behaviour, or have the courage to start a conversation.

6 tips on talking to someone when you are concerned about their mental health and wellbeing:

1. Be prepared

Before reaching out, think about your own headspace and whether you are the right person to have the conversation. If so, great! You can prepare yourself by considering the best time to connect, how (such as a voice or video call), and any privacy factors. Brush up on what kind of [services are available inside and outside of the workplace](#), in case the person needs extra support.

2. Ask them if they're OK

Try to be relaxed in your approach. Help them open up by asking questions like "How are you going?", "What's been happening", or "I've noticed that you're not quite yourself lately. How are you travelling?". Talk about any changes you've noticed in their behaviour, or things you are concerned about and open the floor – allow them to open up in their own way and time.

3. Listen to what they have to say

Encourage them to talk, but accept that they may not be ready or they may be taken by surprise. You may need a few tries to open up the conversation, and they may also need time to think, so sit patiently and allow this to happen. It's important to take the person seriously, don't interrupt, rush, or move too quickly into solution mode.



4. Be prepared for Plan B

If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally. They may just need time to process what they have heard. Reassure them that you care and are asking because you are concerned for them, and are here to listen any time they do want to talk. If they express suicidal thoughts, seek immediate assistance.

5. Encourage them to take action

Sometimes a simple chat or check-in is enough, but if they are open to seeking help, assist them in brainstorming where they can go from here. You might ask "What would be a good first step we can take?" or "What do you need from me? How can I help?". Remember, some good options for people are to seek help from their Employee Assistance Program (EAP), People and Culture team, a family member or friend, their GP or a psychologist. They may also like to speak to a mental health support service like Lifeline, on **13 11 14**. Ask if they would like you to help initiate these actions with them.

6. Keep the door open and check in

It's important to keep the conversation going and create a safe space for ongoing support. Checking in after a few days is a good start to gently ask if they've actioned what you spoke about. Sometimes it's hard for people to take these steps, so be patient and encouraging if they haven't done anything yet. Most importantly, let them know you are there if they need support and keep the door open.

Overall, remember you're not an expert and it's okay if you don't know what to say. Being genuinely supportive and listening will make a difference.