

## Tips: How do I start?

When someone you care about is hurting, it's natural to want to help them. But, that person might not always tell you something is wrong—and you might be unsure about how to reach out. Consider these tips to get started.

### **Create a judgment-free zone. Ask questions like, "How are you feeling?"**

Expect each person to respond differently. Let them respond and talk as much—or as little—as they need.

### **Let them set the pace.**

Use open ended questions that encourage conversations instead of drilling them with back-to-back questions.

### **Am I taking it personally?**

Remember, mental health is a continuum with bad days and good days. Be understanding.

### **Do I accept when things are challenging for them?**

Be patient and don't hold their bad days against them.

### **Create a safe space.**

Let them know their answers won't change what you think about them.

### **Show you're ready to listen.**

Don't start a conversation while you're distracted. Give your full attention.



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### **Am I expecting their illness will be fixed and disappear?**

Reflect on your expectations for them to be “cured.”

### **Check your body language.**

Keep a comfortable distance. Consider sitting next to them rather than in front. Be mindful of your hands, and try to keep them where they can see them.

### **Choose a moment that works for them.**

Send messages or suggest meeting times when it best fits their schedule.

### **Consider sending a text.**

It's OK to start the conversation with a text message. Make sure to follow up and offer other places to talk.

### **Choose locations that work for them.**

Recognize the pandemic may affect where people are comfortable meeting for a long time to come. Going outside or online may work well.



## Tips: How do I say it?

Finding the words can be the hardest part of reaching out to someone. You don't need to be a mental health expert to say things effectively, though. Speaking as your authentic self is enough. If you're looking for some ideas for what to say, many Emotional Support Humans use these phrases.



**"How have you been feeling, lately, really?"**

**"How is therapy going?"**

If you know someone is in therapy, it's OK to ask them about it.

**"It might just be me, but you haven't seemed like yourself lately. Is everything OK?"**

**"What can I do to help you feel better?"**

**"Tough times in the news today. How are you holding up?"**

**"Are you dealing with a stressful time right now?"**

**Use feeling words.**

Try asking about:

Stress.  
Worry.  
Sadness.



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**Do NOT say  
"things could  
be worse."**

Instead ask,  
"What can I do  
to help you feel  
better?"

**Do NOT tell  
someone to  
"get over it" or  
"snap out of it."**

Instead, ask  
what you can  
do to help them  
feel better.

**Do NOT  
say "you're  
probably just  
tired."**

Instead, use  
feeling words to  
ask about their  
stress, worry, or  
sadness.

**"Is anything  
bringing  
you joy this  
week?"**

**"Hey, you  
haven't been  
responding  
to my  
texts lately.  
Are you OK?"**

**"Is this a good  
time to talk?  
When is a  
better time?"**



## Tips: What else can I do?

Feelings take a lot of energy, and sometimes that doesn't leave much space to handle everyday activities. Helping with small household tasks or errands can make a big difference. Even with social distancing, you can find ways to give practical help.

### **"Can I help with a task?"**

Offer to help with chores, like picking up groceries or taking their pet for a walk.

### **"Can I offer you a ride?"**

If safe, offer them a ride to an upcoming appointment or join them on the bus.

### **"Can I better understand your mental health condition?"**

When you become more familiar with their symptoms, you can better understand their experience.

### **Include them in plans.**

Even if they don't feel like joining, let them know they're welcome.

### **Make them a meal.**

Offer to make a favorite meal or tasty dessert. You can enjoy it together or just drop it off.

### **Find new ways to spend time together.**

Consider a chat from your car, order a special treat, or enjoy a movie or book together.

### **Help them find help.**

If they need a mental health professional, you can help them research.

