

Turning silent into listen

Time to Talk Day is about us all being open to the idea of talking - we all have mental health, and by having conversations about it we can help ourselves and others. It's not about encouraging people to talk about a mental health problem if they don't want to.

Running an event in your community, sharing articles or videos, hosting a lunch and learn session at work, or asking others how they're doing are simple ways to start conversations about mental health and show the people in your life you're prepared to talk and listen without judgment.

If someone does open up about their mental health, we know it might not always feel easy to know what to say. But it doesn't have to be awkward, and being there for someone can make a big difference.

There is no right way to talk about mental health; however, these tips can help make sure you're approaching it in a helpful way.



Ask questions and listen

Asking questions can give the person space to express how they're feeling and what they're going through, and it will help you to understand their experience better. Try to ask questions that are open and not leading or judgmental, like "how does that affect you?" or "what does it feel like?"

Ask Twice - sometimes we say we're fine when we're not



Think about the time and place

Sometimes it's easier to talk side by side rather than face to face. So, if you do talk in person, you might want to chat while you are doing something else. You could start a conversation when you're walking, cooking or stuck in traffic. However, don't let the search for the perfect place put you off!

Don't try and fix it

It can be hard to see someone you care about having a difficult time but try to resist the urge to offer quick fixes to what they're going through. Learning to manage or recover from a mental health problem can be a long journey, and they've likely already considered lots of different tools and strategies. Just talking can be really powerful, so unless they've asked for advice directly, it might be best just to listen.



Treat them the same

When someone has a mental health problem, they're still the same person as they were before. And that means when a friend or loved one opens up about mental health, they don't want to be treated any differently. If you want to support them, keep it simple. Do the things you'd normally do.

Be patient

No matter how hard you try, some people might not be ready to talk about what they're going through. That's ok - the fact that you've tried to talk to them about it may make it easier for them to open up another time.

Active Listening Turning silent into listen

Stay calm and find a good place to listen. It doesn't have to be a room, maybe on a walk or in a car? Where would you both feel most comfortable?

Indicate that you're listening. Keep eye contact, if it's appropriate to that person's culture and isn't too intense. Use nods and smiles and if you need to check you've understood something, just ask.

Look out for non-verbal clues. Does the person's body language and facial expression match what they're telling you? If they say they're fine at first, don't be afraid to Ask Twice

Empy space is OK. You don't have to fill all the silence, just being with someone is great. You don't have to fix their problem, in fact it's better if you just give them space.

Never agree to keep suicidal plans secret. And if you're concerned that's what they're thinking about, asking them directly is a really good idea. Call 01684 312730 if you need help or advice.

Try to give someone your full attention. Put the phone down, close the laptop and give someone your undivided time. It's one of the kindest things you can ever do

If you are running an event either face to face or virtually it can be helpful to have an ice-breaker activity - here are a few suggestions.

Love it or loathe it - what do you think of Marmite?

If you could only eat three things for life, what would they be?

Share something that makes you smile

Tell me where you'd live if it could be anywhere in the world

Ever met someone famous? Or who would you most like to meet?

Name your favourite kind of animal

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Look out for and join in with Time to Change Worcestershire activities and campaigns

We think every day is a time to talk day, so we are keeping the conversation going.

If you want to find out more about running activities in the future, keep in touch!

You can call us on 01684 312730

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