

# Tips for talking with young people



We believe talking about mental health can help you and those around you to be happier and healthier.

Anyone who works with or cares for a young person has the opportunity to play an active role in supporting their mental wellbeing. Giving a young person the chance to open up and have a conversation about their mental health can reassure them that help is available and empower them to access appropriate support should they need to.

Starting a conversation is the first step on that journey.

## Creating a safe space



Give yourself **plenty of time** so you don't appear to be in a hurry



Meet in a **neutral space** such as a quiet room or pastoral room



**Sit down** even if the other person is standing – it will make you seem less intimidating



Make it clear that they are **not in trouble**

## Useful questions to ask

How long have you felt like this?

How can I help you?

What kind of support do you think might help you?

How are you feeling at the moment?

## What happens next?



**Keep the conversation going** – follow up and ask them how they are doing. Reassure them that you are always here if they want to talk, and really mean it.



Give **reassurance** that there are **lots of sources of support** and some of these might be available at home through parents/carers, through their place of education, by visiting their GP, or online. If appropriate, offer to go with them to seek support.

## Talking tips



Keep your body language **open and non-confrontational**



**Do not offer glib advice** such as “pull yourself together” or “cheer up”



Be **empathetic** and take them seriously



Take into account **cultural differences** in communication styles e.g. how much eye contact is appropriate



Keep the chat **positive and supportive**, exploring the issues and how you may be able to help



## How to listen



- **Give the person your full focus** and listen without interrupting
- **Listen to their words, tone of voice and body language** – all will give clues as to how they are feeling
- **Accept them as they are.** Respect the person's feelings, experiences and values although they may be different from yours. Do not judge or criticise because of your own beliefs and attitudes
- **Don't make a moral judgement.** Be genuine – show that you accept the person and their values by what you say and do
- **Get on their wavelength.** Place yourself in the young person's shoes and demonstrate to them that you hear and understand what they are saying and feeling

Take a look at our **list of support organisations for young people**

To learn more about how to support the mental wellbeing of young people, visit [mhfaengland.org](http://mhfaengland.org)

Find us on social media by searching 'MHFA England'



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