

TIPSHEET

HOW TO HAVE A SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATION

Engaging in genuine, empathetic conversations is a cornerstone of providing positive mental health and wellbeing support. Club members can demonstrate their concern and willingness to help by proactively checking in with someone who they are worried about.

Sometimes, just knowing someone cares can be a huge help. Expressing concern, active listening, and sharing information on support services and resources can be an invaluable starting point for someone to seek support.

This **How to Have a Supportive Conversation Tipsheet** is designed to provide you with practical tools to have a supportive conversation with someone in need.

Your role is to listen, validate and then direct people to professional support. Your role is not to try and solve the issue or provide mental health advice.

Note: This resource is designed to help direct people to professional support and help if needed. If for any reason you have an immediate concern for someone's health and safety, such as due to a disclosure that self-harm or suicide is planned, call triple zero (000).



PRACTICAL STEPS FOR A SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATION

1

Choose the right environment

Ensure that the setting is quiet, private, and free of distractions. A comfortable environment allows for an open, uninhibited dialogue.

If someone has approached you in a setting that doesn't support a mental health and wellbeing conversation, move the conversation to a more appropriate setting.

2

Open the conversation gently

If you are the one initiating the conversation, open the conversation gently and with an open-ended question.

| *"Hey, I've noticed you've seemed a bit down lately. How are you feeling?"*

If you have been approached by someone initiating the conversation, be available and open.

| *"I'm here for you. What can I do to help?"*

3

Listen actively

Listening means more than just hearing words. Be attentive, maintain eye contact, and refrain from interrupting. Your primary role is to listen and validate.

Hold soft, gentle eye contact. Say:

| *"mmm", "uhuh", "yes."*

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Facilitate the conversation

Be present and showing empathy. Remember, it's not about having all the answers but being there to provide understanding and support.

| *"It sounds like you've been going through a lot. How can I support you?"*

| *"Thank you for sharing this with me. How can I best be here for you?"*

| *"You're not alone in this. I'm here with you."*

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Avoid judgment

Stay neutral and avoid making judgments or offering unsolicited advice.

Avoid saying:

| *"You shouldn't feel that way."*

Instead try:

| *"This sounds like a really hard time for you."*

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Express concern and empathy.

Convey your genuine worry and understanding.

| *"I'm really sorry to hear you're feeling this way."*

7

Ask open-ended questions

Encourage them to share more by posing questions that can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

| *"What has been on your mind lately?"*

8

Respect boundaries

If they are not ready to open up, don't push. Let them know you're available whenever they're ready to talk.

| *"No problem, just thought I would check-in. I'm here for you, whenever you want to talk."*

If they have initiated the conversation and feel uncomfortable with any questions or are only sharing minimal information, let them know you remain available any time.

| *"I am really glad that you reached out. I can talk more whenever you are ready."*

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Avoid comparing or minimising

Even if you've had similar experiences, everyone's journey is unique.

Avoid saying:

| *"I went through this too, and I was fine."*

Instead try:

| *"I can't imagine exactly how you feel, but I'm here to support you."*

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Offer resources

If appropriate, suggest professional resources or helplines. Always ensure they are safe, especially if they express thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

You can access mental health and wellbeing resources here:

- [True Sport - Community Links](#) webpage for information on how to help the person access mental health and wellbeing services.
- [Club and Community eToolkit for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#).
- [Critical Incident eToolkit for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#).

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Direct to professional support (if relevant)

Encouraging the person to seek professional advice and support is the end goal of this process. Remember that it is not your role to act as a mental health expert but to help people seek professional support. Providing the links above, encouraging the person to speak to their GP or contact a mental health service are ways to achieve this objective. Sometimes helping the person make the booking or first contact with a professional can be really valuable for someone experiencing a mental health and wellbeing issue.

“I’d love to help but I’m not really qualified to deal with this type of issue. Would you be willing to speak to a GP or call a helpline?”

“This sounds like a lot to deal with. Can I help you get in touch with a professional?”

“I can’t imagine how difficult this must be for you. Can I help you make a booking with your GP or to call a helpline.”

Depending on your relationship with the person, attending the initial consult or being on the call with a helpline may be a useful way to support them – ask the person what they would prefer.

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Follow up

Send them a message or call a few days later to see how they’re doing. Continuous support can be reassuring. It’s always a good idea to keep the check-in open-ended to invite a response, but also non-invasive to allow them to share what they’re comfortable with.

“Hey, I’ve been thinking about our conversation the other day. How have you been feeling since then?”

“I just wanted to check in and see how you’re doing. Is everything okay?”

“Hey there, it’s been a few days since we talked. I wanted to see if things have gotten any better for you?”

“Hello! Just wanted to drop a quick note to see how you’ve been since we last spoke?”

“Hey! Remember, it’s okay to seek help or someone to talk to if you need it. How are you holding up?”

HELPFUL HINTS

- If someone is in immediate danger or experiencing a crisis, always reach out to emergency services or a qualified mental health professional.
- Check out the [True Sport – Community Links](#) webpage for information on how to help the person access mental health and wellbeing services.
- Access the [Mental Health First Aid Tipsheet](#) in the [Club and Community eToolkit for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) for more information on helping individuals who have expressed thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

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In an Emergency Dial 000
For support call Lifeline 13 11 14
 or visit [True Sport – Community Links](#) for more services.

