



IS IT OKAY TO TALK TO A FRIEND WHO MAY BE SHOWING SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE?

Yes, it's perfectly okay and appropriate to talk to a friend who may be showing signs of emotional distress, so long as this is done with respect and consent. You can do this by gently broaching the subject and asking them if it's something they would feel comfortable talking to you about.

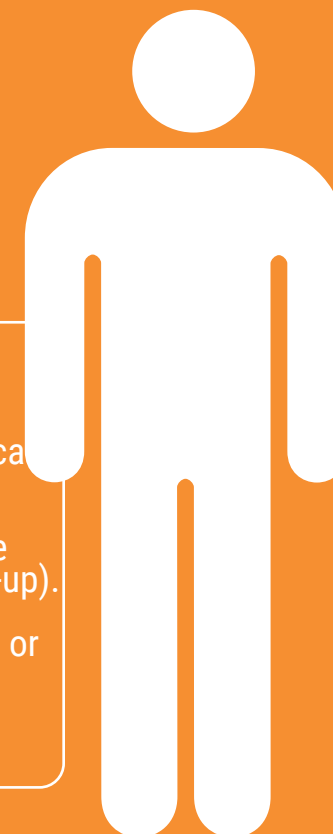


AM I CROSSING A LINE?

But if you're a casual acquaintance or don't share a rapport with the person, it may not be appropriate for this to be the first in-depth conversation you have with them.

Circumstances that may trigger emotional distress

- Loss of a loved one, a job, or a significant amount of money.
- Major life transitions: whether positive (getting married) or negative (a break-up).
- A major illness – either in themselves or someone close to them.
- Experience of traumatic events.



"Talking about mental health is not very different from talking about other health conditions. If it's someone you know, you would ask them about their health and how they're doing. If it's someone you don't know well enough, you wouldn't walk up to them and say, how's your diabetes management going?"

-Dr Sabina Rao, psychiatrist

HOW CAN I TALK ABOUT IT?

If you're concerned about someone's emotional wellbeing, it's best to have the conversation one-on-one and to just listen to what they have to say. They may not need much else at that moment.

*"How's it going?"
"Are you doing okay?"
"Correct me if I'm wrong, but I've noticed that you haven't been yourself lately, how're you doing?"
"I've been meaning to ask you, and it's okay if you don't want to talk to me about this right now...but I've noticed..."*

DO

Have the conversation in private.

Start by casually asking them how they're doing. This will give them an opening to talk about any stress they may be experiencing.

Talk about what you've seen, such as, "Hey, I've noticed that you've taken more days off than usual in the last couple of weeks, and I'm concerned about you. Are you okay?".

Be prepared to hear them out and do so without interrupting and feeling the need to offer advice or make it about yourself.

Ask if there's anything you can do to help in any way. They might feel at a loss to suggest something concrete. You could offer possible ways in which you can be there for them and this will allow them to open up about how you can pitch in.

DON'T

Offer advice.

Try to guess or diagnose their distress.

Tell them what they should do.

Tell them to get over it.

Tell them how you overcame your own distress or problems unless they specifically ask you about it.

OFFERING HELP

DO



Ask them to first speak to a friend, family member or someone they trust. And suggest that if they don't feel better, they reach out to a mental health professional.

Be aware of your limitations. If you're not a trained mental health professional, you're not likely to have the skill to help them deal with their problems. What you can do is be there for them and let them know they have your support.

Have a list of helplines ready to offer to them. Helplines provide immediate psychological support on the phone and can connect them to a resource that's close to them.

DON'T



Make a promise on behalf of another person: their family/friend/manager.

Make commitments you can't follow up on.

Make sweeping generalizations like, "Don't worry, things will be okay" — there's no way you can know that for sure.

Volunteer to mediate or resolve their conflicts with others.

"I'm not sure I can give you the right support for this issue. A better option might be to consult a helpline or a mental health professional. They're more qualified to help."

WHAT IF THEY SAY NO?

"I admit I was concerned about you. If at any point, you want to talk about something, I am available."

If they say no, they may not yet be ready to talk about it or to talk about it with you right now. Your checking in doesn't always have to mean that people will confide in you. When you approach them for a conversation like this, you may be giving them the encouragement they need to open up about something they're struggling with. Even if they're not ready to talk about it right now, it can send a signal that you're someone they can approach in the future.

"Make sure you give them their space. Your concern is valid but each person heals differently. Give them the space to deal with it the way they want to."

- Tanuja Babre, program coordinator, iCall Psychosocial Helpline

