

Helping others with mental health problems

About 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems each year. Most of us know a friend, colleague or family member who has struggled with their mental health.

We can all feel anxious, stressed or low at times in our lives. When these feelings go on for a long time, get worse or affect our day-to-day lives, they may be considered a problem.

If you know someone struggling with their mental health, there are lots of things you can do to help.

Top things you can do to help



Express concern and say you can help

Letting someone know you're worried is a good way to open up a conversation – it shows you care about the person, have time for them and that they do not have to avoid things with you.



Reassure them

The first time someone mentions their worries is a big step. It's good to recognise this and reassure them. Let them know you're there to listen when they need to talk.



Offer your time to listen

Listening is an important skill. Ask open questions that start with "how", "what", "where" or "when". This can help people open up.



Act as you usually do together

Do what you usually do – behaving differently can make someone feel more isolated. Do not be afraid to offer kind words and a space to talk, whether by phone, messaging or in person.



Be patient

You will not always know the full story. There may be reasons why they have found it difficult to ask for help. Just being there can be helpful for someone who may want to open up later.



If they do not want support

Gently explore their reasons for not wanting to get support. If they are unsure whether to get help, just talking and listening without judgement could help work out what's getting in the way.



Do not force it

Do not force someone to talk to you or get help, and do not go to a doctor on their behalf. This may lead to them feeling uncomfortable, with less power and less able to speak for themselves.



Look after yourself

It can be upsetting to hear someone you care about in distress. Be kind to yourself and take some time to relax or do something you enjoy.



Offer practical help

Little acts of kindness – like offering to do the shopping or to go to professional appointments with them – can help. Find out what works for them.