

## CHECKING IN: HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A FRIEND ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

When it comes to mental health, talking about it helps to end stigma, to help people feel less isolated, and begin to soothe some feelings of distress.

These conversations don't have to be hard, but we've compiled a list of ways to have a conversation if you need some ideas. Remember, listening and offering support is the most important step.

### "HOW ARE YOU? WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING FOR YOU LATELY?"

Be friendly and gentle in your approach, and make sure that the other person feels safe and comfortable.

### "I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN YOURSELF LATELY, IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT?"

Identifying something specific that you've noticed in a non-judgemental way (for example, a change in their demeanour or their absence from social events) can show that you care and are concerned.

### "HOW WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO SUPPORT YOU?"

Give them agency and let them decide how you can be helpful. This might not always be a good approach: some people might find this kind of question overwhelming.

### "I'M HERE IF YOU NEED ME"

Let the person know they're not alone. Make sure you follow up: if they do come to you, be there for them.

### "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE IN THE PAST THAT'S HELPED IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS?"

Acknowledge their agency and strength as well as finding out what kind of strategies work for them.

### "WOULD YOU LIKE TO..."

Suggest things they like to do that you could do together.

### "TAKE YOUR TIME, AND WHEN YOU'RE READY, I'M HERE"

If they're not ready to talk right now, don't force them. Let them know you're available to talk another time.

### "WOULD YOU LIKE HELP FINDING SUPPORT"

You don't have to be the only support your friend has. While calling or going to a support service can be daunting, it's that much easier with a friend to help you through it. Remember there are services available.