



SO, YOU'VE ASKED YOUR FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER HOW THEY ARE, AND THEY TELL YOU THEY'RE NOT OK – WHAT NOW?

Talking about how we are feeling is important, but sometimes we can be nervous of doing it because we are worried that we could say the wrong thing or make things worse. This is a step-by-step guide to give you the confidence to know how to respond if someone tells you they're struggling.

1. ASK OPEN QUESTIONS LIKE:

“ What’s been going on lately? ”

“ You don’t seem your usual self, how are you doing/feeling? ”

2. LISTEN

We underestimate the power of simply listening to someone else when they're going through a rough time. You don't need to be an expert in mental health to be a good listener. Here are some tips:

- If you don't have time to talk at that moment, arrange a time when you do. It's better to do this than to leave the other person feeling rushed.
- Listen actively. Pay attention, be present and allow the person time to speak.
- Be curious and ask questions. This can really help you to try to understand things from their perspective

3. DON'T TRY TO FIX THE PROBLEM

Often our first instinct is to want to fix the person's problems. It hurts to see others in pain, and we can feel awkward or helpless not knowing how to help. But you don't have to have all (or any) of the answers.

Instead of jumping into “fix it” mode right away, accept the conversation may be uncomfortable and allow the person to speak about their difficulties and experiences.

4. ASK THEM WHAT THEY THINK MIGHT HELP THEM

They may not be able to think of anything, and that's ok. Some problems or feelings are very difficult.

5. LET THEM KNOW ABOUT SELF-HELP TOOLS AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

There are lots of things that research has shown can help to boost our wellbeing and/or cope with challenging times.

The Just Talk Herts website (justtalkherts.org) has a host of mental health and wellbeing resources, including:

- [Five Ways to Wellbeing E-learning](#), to learn about self-help techniques to boost wellbeing
- Sleep tips and tricks
- Just Talk journal

You can also follow Just Talk on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at @JustTalkHerts – we share advice on how to look after your mental health and signpost onto further resources which can help.

OTHER USEFUL SITES:

- Anna Freud Centre - [Self Care, Anxiety, Depression, Coping Strategies | On My Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)
- www.healthforkids.co.uk and www.healthforteens.co.uk
- <https://healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/> has useful information for professionals in education settings

There is also lots of support available, either through your school or through other agencies across Hertfordshire. A few are listed here, but you can find details of more on www.justtalkherts.org:

- [Services for Young People](#) offer a range of emotional wellbeing support as well as programmes and activities over the summer.
- Herts Mind Network offer messaging and telephone support- <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/services-for-young-people/>
- Chat Health text messaging support for secondary school aged young people 07480 635 050
- Kooth online support for 10-25 year olds: <https://www.kooth.com/>
- Togetherall 16+ (online support for parents, professionals, and year 13 students) [Togetherall](#)
- SPA (single point of access) for more specialist mental health services: HPFT's freephone 24/7 helpline: 0800 6444 101

6. IF YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FRIEND,

it's important to speak to a trusted adult – they may be able to help.

7. CHECK IN AGAIN.

Once your conversation has ended, follow up at a later point to see how they're doing.

8. REMEMBER TO LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING.

It is never possible to support someone else if our own wellbeing is suffering. Please see point 5 for all the things that could help you, and remember that talking shows strength, not weakness.

If you don't feel you are able to support your friend or family member, it can be helpful to sit down with them and identify all the people in their lives that they feel they can trust and talk to. This is sometimes known as a support network. You could even do this together. If someone is struggling to identify anyone, remember there are support agencies out there that are always happy to listen, including:

- Herts Mind Network offer messaging and telephone support- <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/services-for-young-people/>
- Childline – 0800 1111

