

Tips For Talking About Your Mental Health

Asking a friend or an adult for help takes courage. Here are some tips to make that conversation a little easier. If you are worried about your safety, call 1-800-273-TALK*

WITH YOUR FRIENDS

- ✓ If you chose to open up about your mental health to friends, be selective. Share with friends that you trust will listen and care rather than someone who is judgmental or criticizes.
- ✓ Be prepared. You might need to educate your friends about your diagnosis and what it is like for you. They might have questions about mental health. Having a website or information with you can be helpful.
- ✓ Think about what you hope to achieve from this conversation. Perhaps you are hoping for them to understand what has been bothering you or maybe you would like their advice. By knowing what you need, you can ask for it directly.
- ✓ If you feel nervous about talking to your friends about mental health, that's normal! You might feel embarrassed, sad, or worried about how they will react. By recognizing how you are feeling, you can share those concerns with your friends.
- ✓ Pick the right time and place to talk. Find a time when you can approach your friends in a calm way and at a time when they are not busy or stressed.
- ✓ Remember, your friends may all respond differently. Some may seem super supportive right away. Some people may be confused or unsure how they can be helpful and ask a lot of questions. Some may need space and time to think. Each person may be able to offer help in different ways.

WITH YOUR PARENTS OR OTHER ADULTS

- ✓ Think about what you hope to achieve from this conversation. Perhaps it is for an adult to just listen and understand what you are going through or maybe you would like advice, help, or guidance. By knowing what you want, you can ask for it directly.
- ✓ Know your feelings. It is normal to feel nervous when talking about sensitive topics. Maybe you feel worried that telling your parents will make them disappointed or upset. Share that with them. By recognizing how you are feeling, you can put those feelings into words as part of the conversation.
- ✓ Think ahead about what you want to say or ask for. Write down your ideas or create a letter if it is easier.
- ✓ Pick the right time to talk. Find a time when you can approach your parents in a calm way and at a time when they are calm. If unsure, ask them when might be a good time to talk.
- ✓ If you notice that your emotions are high, do something to relax and calm down before you start a conversation.
- ✓ Be as clear and direct as you can about what you think, feel, and want. If you think you need to speak with a therapist, ask directly.
- ✓ Be prepared. You might need to answer questions about what you are going through. Maybe have a website or a handout that you can show them.

WITH YOUR TEACHERS

- ✓ What is your hope for the conversation with your teacher? Perhaps it is for your teacher to understand what you are going through or maybe you would like support in the classroom. It is ok to ask your teacher directly for what you think might help.
- ✓ Know your feelings. You may be worried that your teacher won't understand, will view you differently, or you will feel awkward in class. By recognizing how you are feeling, you can put those feelings into words as part of the conversation. If you aren't sure what you need, you can say that.
- ✓ Be prepared. You might need to educate your teacher about your diagnosis, what it is like for you, and what you have found helpful to manage your symptoms.
- ✓ Pick the right time to talk. If unsure, ask your teacher when might be a good time to talk.

If you are worried about your safety, call 1-800-273-TALK* For more information, please visit interface.williamjames.org or the William James Wellness Center on www.Whyville.net



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