

SOMEONE IS OPENING UP TO YOU. NOW WHAT?

DO...

- Listen. Really listening means actively paying attention to the person who is speaking and resisting the urge to talk about personal experiences unless asked. This is hard for everyone, but practice helps!
- Ask if they've thought about what they might need to feel better. If they haven't, offer to support, listen, and talk it out with them. If they have, support them in following through with their needs.
- Make sure to keep things confidential, unless it is life threatening.
- Normalize. Assure the person you're talking to that having a mental health concern is common, and there are lots of resources to help them feel better.
- Prepare to follow up. It takes courage for someone to speak up about what is bothering them. Exchange contact information (if you don't have it already) and touch base in a few days to see how the person is feeling and if there is anything you can do to help. You may want to research some resources like websites, hotlines, text lines, and community organizations so you can be prepared to offer them if it seems appropriate.

DON'T...

- Tell them, "You shouldn't think that way." It can be difficult to have conversations about mental health concerns, and they may have worried about it for some time before talking to you.
- Use the word "crazy."
- Tell someone what they SHOULD do; instead, ask what they want you to help them with.
- Assume that they want your advice. Many times, people just want someone else to listen to them and help them feel less alone.
- Make comparisons. Telling someone "it could be worse" minimizes their experience and invalidates their feelings.
- Take on trying to fix all the person's problems. Offer help where appropriate, but don't get into a trap of trying to solve the problem, especially if it seems like a professional should be involved.

Visit mhanational.org for additional information and resources about how to support someone who is struggling with their mental health.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.