

# HOW TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

## 4. How to start the conversation

You don't have to have all the answers – just being there and being supportive is great!

### Start with...

“How are you doing?”, “What's happening in your world?”, “How's life?” How's the family?”

If they're okay talking, then mention specific things that have made you concerned, such as

“you don't seem yourself – anything up?”

## 5. How can you support them?

Let them know you are asking because you are concerned about them. If they get upset or angry, stay calm, don't take it personally.

Ask questions about what is going on like:

“Have you spoken to anyone else about this?”

“What would help you manage the load?”

“What can we change to make life easier?”

Don't interrupt or rush, sit patiently in silence while they think. Take it seriously.

## 6. What next?

Think about what other support they may need such as the Employee Assistance Programme, their GP, family, whānau, friends, community and church leaders and help them to contact them.

Avoid assuming what they may need. Ask them things like:

“How can I help?”

“What would be a good first step?”

“What has helped before?”

Follow up in a couple of days.

**In an emergency dial 111 if you think they, you or someone else is at risk of harm.**

- go with the person to the nearest hospital emergency department, or
- phone your local DHB Mental Health Crisis team, or visit [www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/)
- free phone or text **1737** to communicate immediately with a counsellor

Lifeline **0800 543 354** (text **4357**)

Youthline **0800 376 633**

Samaritans **0800 726 666**

## 1. How to have a conversation about mental health

If you think a team member is struggling with their mental health, don't ignore it. Be aware that talking about personal struggles can be difficult and they might get emotional, embarrassed or upset.

So.... think about the right place and the right time.

Maybe at a park, over a coffee, offsite; somewhere quiet and private.

## 2. When a conversation may be needed

Have you noticed **more** fear, anxiety, anger, irritability, sadness and emptiness? Are they withdrawn, quiet, mood swings?

Have you noticed **less** involvement or enjoyment?

Has the person's behaviour or thinking changed?

Concentration, distraction, memory, communication – sentences with hesitation, silences or no ending?

## When a conversation may be needed

Is the person distant, overprotective, jumpy, denying or avoiding, taking risks, hungover or impaired, doing things like speeding or taking risks on site?

Sometimes it's just a gut feeling.

**Trust your gut!**

## 3. No special skills are needed to have a conversation about mental health

You just need to be...

**Empathetic** - try and put yourself in their shoes

**Approachable** – don't judge and don't try and have all the answers

**Willing to listen** – give them your full attention

**And let them know it's confidential!**

