

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO REACH OUT TO A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE WHO MAY BE LIVING WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS?

When you see a friend or a loved one who may be struggling with their mental health, it can be difficult to know what they need. However, a great way to find out is to talk to them about how you can best provide support.

If you want to be there for a friend or loved one who may be living with mental illness, be prepared to listen and let them know you care. It's important that you provide a safe space for them to share their experience; try not to tell them how they should feel or what they should do.

Use one of our conversation starters below to reach out to a friend about their mental health, and by doing so, you can help to reduce stigma around mental illness in your community:

- "Hey, it seems like you have a lot on your mind lately. How are you?"
- "I just wanted to say that I am here if you want to talk about anything. Can we get together this week?"
- "I noticed you have missed a few days of school, and I just wanted to check in with you to see how you are doing."
- "I haven't seen you in a while! How have you been?"
- "I know life can feel like a lot sometimes, but if you need someone to talk to, I want you to know that I am here."
- "You've seemed a little down lately and I wanted to see how you are doing."
- "I just want you to know I am here for you if you ever need to talk."
- "I know things have been hard lately; let me know if you want to talk about it. I'm here for you."

READY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Living with a mental illness feels different for everyone – some feel isolated and alone, others may feel confused and some may be at peace with their condition. Anyone living with a mental illness may need support at one time or another, and having people to talk to and open up with can make all the difference.

If you want to talk about your own experience with mental illness, or share how you are feeling, talk with a close friend or family member and ask for their support. Let them know that you don't expect them to have all the answers, but it would help if they listened as you talk about your experience.

Here are some potential ways to start this conversation:

- "Do you have time to talk later? I have been having a hard time lately and would love to talk through it with you."
- "Are you free to grab coffee this week? I could use a friend right now."
- "Thank you for checking in on me. I wasn't in a good place to talk at the time, but I am now and would like to talk if you are free."
- "Things have been hard for me lately. Are you available to meet up this week?"
- "Do you want to go for a walk this weekend? I have been working through some issues lately, and it would help me to talk about it with someone."
- "I was recently diagnosed with a mental health condition and I could use someone to talk to. Can you and I talk soon?"
- "I'm feeling a little out of balance lately. Can we connect this week?"