

TRUSTED PERSON CONVERSATION TOOLKIT



LEND AN EAR. CHANGE A LIFE. When someone you care about is going through a hard time, it's only natural to want to help. But how? If a young person chooses you as his or her trusted person to talk to, you don't need to be an expert to offer support. Just listen, be empathetic, and follow the following advice.

LISTEN.

DON'T JUDGE.

HELP.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS. While it can be challenging to know what's going on inside a young person's mind, often you can recognize signs of trouble in everyday life. If you notice that someone is showing a few of these warning signs, it's a good idea to make yourself available for a conversation.

DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE:

- // Acting sad or hopeless for more than two weeks
- // Losing interest in favorite activities
- // Isolated from friends and family
- // Change in eating habits—either no appetite or overeating
- // Unexplained fatigue
- // Problems concentrating at school or work
- // Problems sleeping
- // Recently gone through a stressful event like a break up
- // Talking frequently about death or self-harm

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

- // Family history of addiction
- // Low energy, bloodshot eyes, or slurred speech
- // Appearing anxious, shaky, or fatigued
- // Memory lapses, blackouts, or trouble concentrating
- // Change in appearance or personal hygiene
- // Loss of interest in favorite activities
- // Arguing more with family and friends

HOW TO HANDLE THE CONVERSATION.

WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO ENCOURAGE THE CONVERSATION:

“How are you feeling?”

“I’ve noticed you’ve been acting differently lately. Is everything OK?”

“If you ever need someone to talk to, I’m here for you.”

“I’m worried about you. Is there any thing you need to talk about?”

The conversation may not be an easy one, but it’s an important part of the process of getting proper help. And if you see a young person who seems to be struggling but isn’t talking about it, consider initiating the conversation yourself.

Here are a few ways you make the conversation as welcoming and productive as possible:

KEEP THINGS CASUAL. Have the conversation in a comfortable setting such as a coffee shop, school, home, or anywhere that you can have some privacy away from distractions.

SIT BACK AND LISTEN. Once the person has said what he or she needs to say, don’t rush to judgment. But it’s OK to ask questions to get more information.

DON’T ASSUME this is a normal phase or will go away. Mental health issues and substance abuse are medical problems and require treatment.

BE AWARE the person may be experiencing multiple issues. For example, substance abuse is often connected with depression. The person may not be aware of an underlying issue.

DON’T TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM ALL AT ONCE. Remember, this is just the start of the process.

ASK THE PERSON what he or she wants to do next. It’s important the young person stays in control of the journey.

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE CONVERSATION. Hopefully the first conversation goes well and the young person feels a sense of relief and hopefulness. Be sure to keep things moving in a positive direction.

1 Stay in touch with the young person and check in on how he or she is feeling.

2 Remind the person to make **healthy lifestyle choices** such as diet, exercise, and sleep.

3 Encourage and help the person find the **appropriate resources.**

4 Offer to go with the person to talk with **parents** or a **mental health or substance abuse professional.**

Visit [JustTellOne.org](https://www.JustTellOne.org) or call 716.245.6JT1 to find available services in your area.



Just Tell ONE.org