



MENTAL HEALTH

HOW TO GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED ONE ON ONE



Many of us know someone experiencing mental illness but aren't quite sure what to do or how to help. We might see a mate, family member or work colleague doing it tough but grapple with... 'what should I say', 'I don't know how to help' or 'maybe I should mind my own business'. It may be uncomfortable and you may feel out of your league but the important thing to know is that you don't need to be an expert to get the conversation started. Just being there for someone is sometimes the major turning point to recovery.

USEFUL TIPS TO HELP YOU GET THE CONVERATION STARTED

If you see someone going through a tough time and not travelling really well and you want to reach out but not sure what to do then this fact sheet aims to provide you some helpful tips to get the conversation started.

Sometimes a person might not identify or relate to experiencing mental illness but they know and feel that things are just not right. It can be a massive relief for them to know there is someone willing to listen without judgement.

The main thing to remember is that many people experience mental health issues at some time in their lives. It's important not to underestimate the value of just being there for someone.

So, don't ever forget the power of simple conversation. It's an art that has taken a back seat to so many other forms of communication. It is an art that requires practice but is so powerful to an individual. It is a tried and tested and the beauty of it is it also comes with context. There is very little room for misinterpretation that often happens with text and most importantly it allows people to connect.

Dan Allen (Co-founder TradeMutt/TIACS)

💡 TIP 1 – RIGHT SPACE, PLACE & TIME

- Find a space where you won't be interrupted and the person will feel comfortable e.g going for a walk, find a spot outside that you can sit away from other people.
- Try allowing a decent amount of time for the conversation so it's not rushed.

💡 TIP 2 – BE OPEN

- Put the invitation out there and take the first step to check in on someone – *'Hey, have you got time for a yarn'*.
- You may hear some things that are concerning or overwhelming. Stay calm and don't react negatively as it may make the situation more stressful for the person.
- Be patient, there might be a few awkward pauses. When someone is ready to talk, they're not always wanting advice but just need to download and talk about what's happening for them. Be open-minded and non-judgemental.
- Sometimes it might take a few goes. They may not want to open up at first but checking back in can show the person that you are genuine in your offer.

💡 TIP 3 – LISTENING & KNOWING WHAT TO SAY

- Listen carefully to what they're saying and try not to interrupt with any comments or queries until they've finished.
- Start the conversation by sharing that you've noticed they don't seem their usual self. You may say something like – *'I've noticed you haven't been hanging out lately and keeping to yourself'*.
- Maintain comfortable eye contact and sit in a relaxed position. Don't check your mobile through the conversation This will help show the person that your focus is with them.
- You might feel tempted to share your own struggles and how you got through. It's okay to share similar experiences but be careful not to compare. Stay at their pace and focus on their conversation and what's happening for them. At the right time, you may decide to share what you did to cope.

💡 TIP 4 – WHERE TO FROM HERE

- At the end of the conversation let them know you really appreciated that they talked to you and reassure them it was a positive step. You might say *'I'm glad you talked to me about this – I'm here if you need to talk again'*.
- Keep the conversation going. Check in on them frequently. This will show that you are there for them. It'll also strengthen their support team.
- Help them identify next steps for further support. Sometimes, offering to go to the GP with someone can be helpful. See information below for a list of useful resources and support services that you could offer. Don't force the options as they may not be ready to talk to a professional. Ultimately, it's their choice.

💡 TIP 5 – LOOK AFTER YOURSELF TOO

- Look after yourself. Supporting someone can be taxing on your own wellbeing. Try to get enough rest and take time for yourself. Setting boundaries might be necessary too.

CALL TIACS 0488 846 988 offers free, confidential and accessible counselling both over the phone and text to truckies, tradies, blue collar workers and those who care about them. Mon-Fri 8am -10pm AEST

LISTEN TradeMutt Radio [TradeMutt Radio on Apple Podcasts](#) hosted by two Aussie tradies that put down the tools and embarked on a mission to change the face of mental health in Australia by using bright and funky work wear as a way to start conversations and make an invisible issue impossible to ignore. Ed Ross and Dan Allen take a colourful spin on blue collar mental health sharing yarns from under the TradeMutt bonnet, hearing from mutters first hand and taking a dive into relevant topics from their own perspective while also leaning on the expertise of mental health professionals from their not for Profit, TIACS.

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