



How to Start a Conversation and check-in prompts



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Starting conversations with your friends, family members, or coworkers can build a strong foundation and strengthen your relationships with them. While talking about mental health can seem daunting, simple conversations can make a difference.

Ask open-ended questions:

When you check-in, you don't have to dive right into the conversation about mental health. Try questions like:

- What did you like about today?
- What are you looking forward to?
- How can I help you make tomorrow a good day?

Use "I" statements, not "you" statements:

Using "I" statements help you stay clear of making judgements about the other person. Be careful not to disguise "you" statements as "I" statements. Stick to your feelings and give examples that are objective, rather than passing judgment on the other person.

Don't say: You are always mean when you talk to me. **Do say:** I feel hurt when you use that tone of voice.

Don't say: You are careless and irresponsible. **Do say:** I care about you and your safety. I worry when you stay out late.

Practice active listening:

Follow these steps to practice active listening:

- Always express your feelings using "I" statements.
- Take turns speaking. Let the other person finish their thoughts without interrupting.
- Ask questions if you don't understand. For example, "Can you help me understand what you mean when you say _____?"
- Repeat and clarify what the other person is saying. For example, "What I hear you saying is _____, is that correct?"
- Repeat step two and three until you're sure you understand what is being said.
- If you're unable to find a solution or common ground, it's okay to take a break and revisit the conversation later.

Ways to start a conversation with someone you think may be struggling:

- "I care about you, and I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately, and I'm wondering how you are doing."
- "With everything that's going on in your family, I wonder if you're feeling overwhelmed."
- "I've been through things in my life, too, and what I've often found is that talking about it helps. Whatever it is, I'm here to listen and support you."
- "You've been there for me so many times, how can I be there for you now?"
- "I'm always just a phone call or text away."

Use emojis or images to identify emotions:

When starting conversations with kids, a helpful tool you can use is an emotions chart, which uses illustrations, images, or emojis to represent feelings. You can also use an emotions chart with people of all ages who find it challenging to identify their emotions. Find a downloadable emotions chart [HERE](#).

Keep trying and be genuine:

Any relationship takes work and consistent effort. Keep practicing your conversation skills during your daily or weekly check-ins with your friends, family, and co-workers.

To speak to someone at Easterseals MORC, call 1.800.75.SEALS.

If you or a loved one is experiencing a mental health emergency, call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.

Source: [The Check-In Project](#)



Scan the code to learn more about the Choose Kindness campaign.