

TOP TIPS

Top tips from our charity experts and consultant clinical psychologist, Dr Lucy Maddox, on how to make your conversations more meaningful.

Getting the set up right

- Be flexible - use different communication methods depending on what people like and what feels right. It's the way you use media that matters.
- Leave the other person space to speak - it's okay to have silence; don't try to move onto solutions too fast.
- Try walking, driving or playing a game to take the intensity of eye contact out of a conversation.
- Being consistently in touch even in small ways is a good way to form the basis for bigger conversations. It doesn't always have to be heavy.

Getting the conversation flowing

- Ask open questions: "How do you feel about...?" "What did you do yesterday?" "Tell me about..."
- Try offering your own experiences to help someone help up - "when I feel down I tend to..."
- Ask a surprising or specific question to sidestep the usual conversation patterns.

Helping someone open up

- Be present in the moment and give someone your full attention - put your screens away and make sure you're not thinking about something else.
- Summarise back what the other person has said to show that you are listening.
- Don't jump to conclusions about what someone means. Instead check how they feel about something by asking rather than assuming.
- Try and remain empathetic and open minded - a negative reaction can shut someone down.
- Pay attention to non verbal cues - Eye contact, body language, tone of voice, both yours and theirs. If you seem like you're paying attention they will be more likely to feel heard.
- Follow up if you feel like someone isn't feeling good or is a bit off shows you have noticed.

