



Start the Conversation: How to Talk to Teens About Mental Health

Talking about mental health with teens can be challenging. By using open-ended questions, you allow teens to answer in their own words. Here are some questions to get the conversation going, along with questions that can open up the conversation about mental health. The key is to keep the lines of communication open with teens.



BREAK THE ICE

Sometimes, you just need a way to engage a teenager and start a conversation. Questions like these can help.

1. **If you could have anyone do the voice-over for your reflections on life, who would it be?**
2. **What is one of the most adventurous things you've ever done?**
3. **What is some place that you would really like to visit?**
4. **If you could be a contestant on any game show, which one would you choose?**
5. **If you could have any one superpower, which one would you choose and why?**
6. **If you had \$1,000 to spend, how would you spend it?**
7. **What is your favorite thing to do with friends?**
8. **What is your dream car?**
9. **If you could go on a trip anywhere with three other people, where would you go and what three people would you take?**
10. **What was your favorite movie when you were younger?**

STEER THE CONVERSATION TOWARD MENTAL HEALTH

Incorporate these questions into your conversations to help teens identify and talk about their feelings and experiences on a deeper level.

1. **When do you get discouraged?**
2. **When do you feel most vulnerable?**
3. **What is something you like about yourself?**
4. **What is something you are looking forward to doing within the next six months?**
5. **What is one regret you have from last week?**
6. **What was the highlight of your week?**
7. **What is the biggest struggle you are facing in life right now?**
8. **What is one personal tragedy you have overcome?**
9. **Name one weakness and one strength you have.**
10. **Name one short-term goal and one long-term goal you have.**

Find more information and resources at www.GrantHalliburton.org

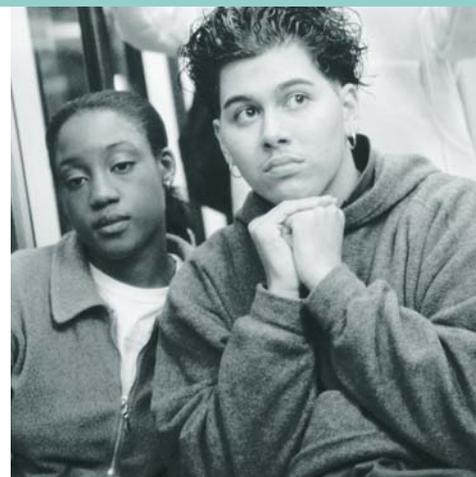
What Helps and What Hurts

When someone you care about has depression or bipolar disorder

People living with depression or bipolar disorder (manic depression) often cope with symptoms like feelings of hopelessness, emptiness or worthlessness. You probably want to say something to help the person feel better. But what can you say? Why does it seem like many well-meant comments hurt more than they help?

Here is a basic list to use as guidelines when you talk to someone who has symptoms of depression or bipolar disorder. Put the statements into your own words. What's most important is that the person you care about understands your support. You didn't cause your loved one's illness and you can't control the person's feelings. You can only do your best to offer help.

If the person is actively threatening suicide, don't try to handle the situation on your own. Call a mental health professional or take your friend to the nearest emergency room for treatment.



What helps

I know you have a real illness and that's what causes these thoughts and feelings.

I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel but I care about you and want to help.

You are important to me. Your life is important to me.

Tell me what I can do now to help you.

You might not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.

You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.

Talk to me. I'm listening.

What hurts

It's all in your head.

We all go through times like this.

You have so much to live for – why do you want to die?

What do you want me to do?
I can't change your situation.

Just snap out of it.
Look on the bright side.

You'll be fine. Stop worrying.

Here's my advice...

When you have depression or bipolar disorder

What can I do to help others understand what helps and what hurts?

- Set aside some time to sit down with family members or friends and talk about something important. Choose a time that is relatively calm and free of distractions.
- Begin your statements with yourself: "I feel," or "I need." Avoid "you" statements like "You always criticize me," which may be more likely to lead to arguments.
- Tell them what they **can** say or do that will help you. This includes practical things like helping with housework or taking you somewhere.
- Ask for help when you need it. If you feel better, thank the people who helped you.
- Look for more than one person to support you. Different people offer different perspectives.