

Talking about mental health

A print-ready fact sheet for clinics, classrooms and community groups.

Category	Mental health
Translations	14 languages
Print format	A5 booklet
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A conversation guide for community health workers. It deliberately avoids clinical vocabulary, because the words that work in a consulting room often close a conversation down on a doorstep.

What to do

- Ask about sleep, appetite and worry before asking about mood - they are easier to answer honestly.
- Listen for longer than is comfortable. Silence is not a failure of the conversation.
- Do not promise confidentiality you cannot keep. Say who you may need to tell, and why.
- Ask directly about thoughts of self-harm. Asking does not plant the idea, and not asking leaves it unspoken.

Wording that helps

- Say: "That sounds very heavy to carry." Not: "Everything happens for a reason."
- Say: "What would make tomorrow slightly easier?" Not: "You should try to think positively."
- Say: "I would like to come back on Thursday." Not: "Let me know if you need anything."

Using this sheet

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