

TALKING TO YOUR FRIENDS

ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH



For many of us, it can be a real challenge to open up and talk to our peers about how we are feeling, whether that is about a particular scenario or longer-term general feelings.

If you find yourself reacting to a situation with negative emotions or experiencing distress, it can leave you struggling to understand what has happened and wondering how to deal with it so it doesn't affect your mental health. A survey published by YouGov shows that 44% of people felt that the recent COVID pandemic has had a fairly to huge negative impact on their mental health (YouGov, October 2020).

A survey, conducted by The Diana Award to meet the emerging needs of young during the Covid-19 crisis, reveals 85% of young people and 98% of staff working with young people say mental health is a high priority (The Diana Award, April 2020).

Mental health issues do not affect just one group of people; they can impact any person of any age, including young people. The impact of longer-term mental health conditions can be severe for any person, particularly when they do not share how they're feeling with others.. Rethink Mental Illness has found that the avoidance of acknowledging a mental health problem is hugely damaging to young people, particularly those who are entering university (Rethink Mental Illness, 2018).

Here are some additional resources in case you need any more support or information about mental health:

Childline – 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

The Diana Award Crisis Messenger – Text 'DA' to 85258. Trained volunteers will listen to how you're feeling and help you plan the next steps towards feeling better.

Young Minds – www.youngminds.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness – www.rethink.org

REFERENCES

[YouGov, October 2020](#)

[Rethink Mental Health, 2018](#)

[The Diana Award, April 2020](#)

HOW CAN I TALK TO MY FRIENDS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

- 1. Firstly, identify who you might want to talk to** – these people will form your Support Network. A support network is a group of people and/or organisations who you could go to in a crisis or even if you just want someone to talk to. Do you know a friend who is a particularly good listener? Or someone who you think might be able to relate? Is there a teacher who you trust at school? What about a school nurse/counsellor? Or even a lunch club/after-school club where you could speak with a teacher? You can also check out our [Support Centre](#) for a list of helpful organisations like Samaritans.
- 2. Next, find a method of communication that works for you.** Conversations don't have to happen in person, they can be by text, online chat or a video call. You could reach out to anyone that you trust by text to say "hey, can we talk about how I've been feeling recently?" Whatever you feel comfortable with. You can also use The Diana Award Crisis Messenger which provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If you are a young person in crisis, you can text DA to 85258. Trained volunteers will listen to how you're feeling and help you think the next step towards feeling better.
- 3. Before you have a conversation, you may find it useful to look at some information and resources online** to see if any of them might help you describe how you've been feeling. You can find some suggestions from us at The Diana Award below.
- 4. You can also try and find ways you can help yourself**, so that you can bring these into the conversation you will have with that trusted person and bounce ideas around with them. Self-help can be very powerful.
- 5. If you're nervous, try writing down what you want to say in advance** so you feel ready and prepared to share.
- 6. Hold the conversation at a time and place that feels safe for you.** Having these discussions should always be on your terms so you always feel safe.
- 7. In our training, we always put in place a Group Agreement**, as we know that some topics can be difficult to talk about at times, especially if it's affecting you in some way. In this Group Agreement, we say 'Be Open and Honest' which can also apply when having a private conversation with someone. By expressing to your friend that you want to 'Be Open and Honest' with them and then trying your best to do so, you'll help clearly show them how you are feeling and help them find the best ways to support you.
- 8. Take your time** – if you need to take a break from the conversation or you feel yourself becoming too upset to continue, it's okay to pause or ask to come back to it after a break.
- 9. Talk about yourself like you would a good friend; be kind as you describe yourself** and how you're feeling and try not to brush anything off as "nothing". If it's important to you, it's important. Think about how you would feel if your friend told you they were feeling upset or were struggling with their mental health – you'd do your best to support them and be happy that they shared this with you. Your friends will likely be happy you could share this with them too.
- 10. Remember to be realistic;** you may not be able to completely change or improve the situation you are in through one conversation but the first conversation is a great place to start – so well done for taking that step!

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

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