



Template Newsletter #3

Make It OK: Learn What to Say

Talking more openly about mental illnesses is key to helping reduce the stigma.

We must stop the silence of mental illnesses. When someone reaches out for help and it's met with silence it can feel dismissive and lead to feelings of shame and isolation. Saying something is better than nothing. Consider this, if you don't know what to say, think about what you would say to someone who just told you they have cancer, and say that.

Here are more tips to help be supportive and feel more comfortable talking about mental illnesses.

What to Say

Let's pretend someone you know just told you they're struggling with anxiety or depression.

What do you say? Here are a few suggestions.

- "Thanks for opening up to me."
- "I'm here for you when you need me."
- "I'm sorry to hear that. It must be tough."
- "Do you want to talk about it?"
- "Can I drive you to an appointment or make a meal?"
- "How are you feeling today?"

What Not to Say

Sometimes our words may reinforce the stigma. Remember mental illnesses are medical conditions. They are biological in nature, just like a physical illness, such as diabetes. Most mental illnesses can be treated effectively with medication, therapy, nutrition, physical activity and social support. Avoid using derogatory or dismissing language, such as:

- "It could be worse."
- "Snap out of it."
- "Everyone feels that way sometimes."
- "You may have brought this on yourself."
- "Pull yourself together."
- "Try thinking happy thoughts."

Rule of Thumb

Although talking about mental illnesses may be uncomfortable for you at first, know that it is also a difficult conversation for your friend. Be nice, listen, be supportive and stay in contact.

Visit MakeltOk.org to learn more, or to start the conversation by [taking the pledge to Make It OK](#).