# How to Approach Someone with Mental Health Struggles

When someone is struggling with mental health, they often feel isolated, lonely, hopeless, and sometimes scared. Mental health struggles can be extremely isolating and all-consuming. It can be even more difficult for them to reach out for help. People who are struggling with mental health illnesses sometimes feel like asking for help is weak. This is not true! Asking for help isn’t weak; it’s actually the strongest thing a person can do.

To start off, there are a few warning [signs](https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/helping-a-loved-one-cope-with-mental-illness) and symptoms to look out for. Someone struggling with mental health or mental illness can isolate, withdraw from social activities, and have difficulty concentrating. They also might show symptoms of sleep changes, appetite changes, and attitude changes. This will look different for each person. If you aren’t sure if your loved one is struggling with a mental health disorder, the best way to find out is to talk to them about it. It can be scary to approach someone struggling with their mental health because it’s not always clear how they will react. If the way that they are approached is in a negative light, this may discourage them from getting help. You don’t have to be perfect, but leading with compassion and love is the most important thing.

There isn’t a set script for the best way to approach someone struggling with mental health. But there are some practices to try that can be received more positively. Before you have a [conversation](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-talk-to-an-addict-22012) about your concerns, it can be helpful to prepare yourself. One way to do this is to educate yourself about the specific mental health issue your loved one is struggling with. There is an abundant amount of resources to educate yourself on mental health. You can use books, documentaries, and online. When you’re looking online, it’s important to evaluate if it’s a credible search. If possible, using information from professionals in the field is the best way to get the most up-to-date information.

After you feel prepared for the conversation, you can try to set a time with your loved one. If possible, you should choose a location where your loved one feels comfortable and safe. As we mentioned earlier, there is not a cookie-cutter way to approach these types of conversations. All you can do is try your best and try to lead with as much empathy and compassion as possible. It’s also imperative to avoid placing [judgment](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/blog/how-to-help-someone-with-ocd.php). One of the most important things is to lead with “I” statements. These types of statements are so helpful when talking to your loved one because they help them to feel less judged. Some examples of [“I Feel” statements](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-feeling-statements-425163) are: “I feel worried about…” or “I feel scared when I see you…”. This shifts the conversation to how you are feeling about the situation.

Something else that can be helpful when approaching this conversation is practicing active listening. Active listening involves listening to the person talking in an attempt to understand what they are saying fully. Sometimes, when you’re in a conversation, it can be easy to focus on how you will respond instead of what the person is saying. This causes you to miss valuable information this way. Because of this, you must listen to what the person is saying fully so you can reflect and respond appropriately. Another tool that active listening teaches is asking broad questions. Broad questions can allow the person to expand on what they are saying and take the conversation in different directions. This can be helpful to make the other person more comfortable and to give more information about their struggles.

If you are looking for more ways to help, you can try helping them call their insurance company, go to appointments with them, help them look for therapy, or ask them if they have any tasks they need help with. Suggesting an [online counselor](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/telehealth/art-2004487) to do therapy can be helpful for people struggling with anxiety about going in person. When someone is struggling with their mental health, they will often neglect daily tasks and chores. You could help them make a to-do list of their tasks to stay more organized, or you could complete the tasks for them. Something that might not seem like a big deal to you could make the biggest difference for someone struggling. Taking care of these things for your loved one allows them to focus on their treatment.

On the other hand, there are some things to remember to avoid saying if possible. You want to avoid any comments that make the person feel like their mental health concerns are made up. Even if you don’t understand the mental health struggle, the experience is still valid to the person struggling. It’s also unhelpful to assume that people can just flip a switch to recover from their mental illness. This couldn’t be more false. Recovery from mental illnesses is a lifelong battle that requires professional help. It’s also helpful to avoid comments that blame the person for their struggles.

As we previously mentioned, recovery from mental health struggles can be a lifelong battle. This means that the person struggling will likely have a long journey ahead of them. While it’s incredible that you were able to have a conversation with your loved one, maintaining contact throughout their recovery can be even more helpful. You can schedule times to check in with them or try to be mindful of how often you check in. This can help the person struggling to feel accountable, which can help the success of their recovery.

If your loved one is not receptive to having a conversation, it can be discouraging. It’s incredibly challenging to watch someone you love hurt so much. Feeling powerless and hopeless is completely normal when you are supporting someone. Unfortunately, we cannot force our loved ones to get help. We can encourage them to seek help and show them how their illness might be affecting their lives. However, the most important thing to remember is to be patient. It may take your loved one some time to come to terms with getting help. We understand it can be hard, but we encourage you to continue to try.

Supporting someone with mental health struggles can be a stressful experience for the supporter also. It’s important to take care of your mental health so that way you can help your loved ones. There are support groups available for supporters that can help you take care of yourself when you’re helping someone else. Sometimes, talking to someone else in your shoes can help you feel validated throughout this journey.

It’s normal to feel nervous about approaching your loved one about your concerns about their mental health. Even reading this article is a great start to helping your loved one. Be gentle with yourself during the process, supporting someone in recovery can be tough. However, if you are able to push through those feelings, you could provide a lot of support for your loved one. It’s very challenging to go through recovery without support. We can guarantee your loved one will be thankful that you tried to reach out. If providing support for your loved one is causing you distress, you can consider seeing a counselor yourself. If you are interested in working with someone, you can [reach out](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php) here.

**References**:

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