



Stigma Free  
Lanarkshire

# Caring Conversations

Talking about mental health can be daunting if you feel you don't have enough understanding or if you don't know how to help somebody. Most often, people just want to be able to get their feelings off their chest without worrying about the reaction they might receive.

Stigma Free Lanarkshire have put together these 5 simple tips for how to have a caring conversation with somebody that has reached out to you.

These tips were adapted from information available from the Mental Health Foundation and Mind, and are intended to be used as a guide for conversations with others in your community.

**We hope that these tips will help you challenge stigma at the time it is heard or experienced.**

# Tip 1

## Let them share as much or as little as they want to

Let them lead the discussion at their own pace. Don't put pressure on them to tell you anything they aren't ready to talk about.

Try to leave any questions or comments you may have until the person has finished so you don't interrupt them.

Use positive body language, and encourage the person to continue with small verbal comments like 'I see' or 'what happened next?' This will let them know that you are paying attention to what they are saying and actively listening to them.

## Tip 2

**Don't try to diagnose  
or second guess their  
feelings**

You probably aren't a medical expert and, while you may be happy to talk and offer support, you aren't a trained counsellor. Try not to make assumptions about what is wrong or jump in too quickly with your own diagnosis or solutions. The important thing is to listen rather than to give advice.

# Tip 3

## Listen carefully to what they tell you

Repeat what they have said back to them to ensure you have understood it. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but by showing you understand how they feel, you are letting them know you respect their feelings.

# Tip 4

## Keep questions open ended

Try to avoid asking too many questions, especially questions that only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or that begin with the word 'why'. Ask open questions to invite a more detailed response:

- Tell me how you're feeling?
- How do you look after yourself?
- What support do you have in place?

## Tip 5

### Provide reassurance

Reassure them that it is positive that they want to talk about their experience, what's happening with them, or that they are looking for support (if this is the case). Mental health problems are more common than people think and can affect anyone at any time. If they need further support, encourage them to see their GP or even offer to go with them if you can.



# For mental health support and info, check out...

## **Samaritans**

Offer a 24 hour confidential support service

**Call: 116 123**

## **NHS 24**

Provides urgent health advice

**Call: 111**

Mon – Thurs 6pm – 8am

Fri 6pm – Mon 8am  
(24hr at weekends)

## **Breathing Space**

Offer advice and support if you need someone to talk to

**Call: 0800 83 85 87**

Mon – Thurs 6pm – 2am

Fri 6pm – Mon 6am  
(24hr at weekends)

## **Elament**

Mental health resources

**[www.elament.org.uk](http://www.elament.org.uk)**