

How to Talk About Depression

A Conversation Guide for Supporters, Friends, and Loved Ones

Talking about depression isn't always easy. Maybe you're worried about saying the wrong thing. Maybe you don't know how to start. But the truth is, **starting the conversation can make a real difference.**

This toolkit offers **simple, thoughtful ways** to talk about depression with someone you care about – or to open up about your own experience. Whether you're supporting a loved one, co-worker, or friend, these tools can help create space for **honesty, understanding, and connection.**

Step One:

Identifying Signs It Might Be Time To Talk

You don't have to wait for a crisis to start the conversation. Look out for:

- A noticeable change in energy, appetite, or sleep
- Withdrawing from friends or activities
- Persistent sadness or irritability
- Loss of interest in things they usually enjoy
- Talking about feeling hopeless or worthless
- Saying things like "I'm tired of everything" or "I don't want to do this anymore"

If something feels off—trust your instincts.

It's okay to check in.

Step Two:

Exploring Different Conversation Starters

Not sure what to say to someone experiencing depression? Try:

- ✿ “I’ve noticed you haven’t seemed like yourself lately. Want to talk about it?”
- ✿ “You don’t have to go through this alone – I’m here for you.”
- ✿ “No pressure, but if there’s ever anything on your mind, I’m open to listening.”
- ✿ “What’s been feeling heavy for you lately?”
- ✿ “Would it help to talk, or even just sit together quietly for a while?”

Step Three:

Learning What To Avoid Saying

Intentions matter – but so do words. Try to avoid:

- ✗ “Just think positive.”
- ✗ “Everyone feels that way sometimes.”
- ✗ “You have so much to be grateful for.”
- ✗ “Snap out of it.”
- ✗ “It could be worse.”

Instead, offer validation, empathy, and curiosity. Depression isn’t a mindset **it’s a medical condition.**

Step Four:

What To Say If You're the One Opening Up

Starting the conversation from your side? You could say:

- ✿ “I’ve been struggling with my mental health lately, and I want to be honest about it.”
- ✿ “Some days feel really heavy, and I don’t always know how to explain it—but I’d like to try.”
- ✿ “I live with depression, and I’d love to share more with you if you’re open to listening.”

It’s okay to not have all the words. You deserve to be heard and supported.

Step Five:

Know What to Do Next

After the conversation:

- ✿ Follow up - even if it’s just a text to check in
- ✿ Help explore options, like DBSA peer support groups or talking to a professional
- ✿ Don’t try to fix - just stay consistent and compassionate
- ✿ Know your limits - it’s okay to set boundaries and ask for help too

Talking about depression doesn’t have to be perfect – it just has to be honest. Whether you’re supporting someone else or advocating for yourself, know this: **you are not alone**. DBSA is here to help with free peer support, resources, and community.

Visit dbsalliance.org

Join a group. Share a resource. Start the conversation.