

Handout: Responding to someone you are worried about

Top tips

Time and space

Find an appropriate time and space to talk with someone – somewhere nice and quiet where you won't be interrupted

Ask open questions

Questions like this can help:

- I've noticed that you don't seem yourself – what can I do to help?
- What's been happening?
- How are things?
- Tell me more about....

Offer reassurance

Someone in distress needs to hear from you that you care:

- You're not alone in this
- Thank you for trusting me and being open
- You are important
- You're doing the right thing by asking for support
- It sounds like it was difficult to talk about this – I'm here to listen
- I can't imagine what you're going through, but I'd like to know more so I can help

Be patient

This might be the first time someone is opening up, which can be very hard. It can take a while before someone is ready to access support.

Leave silence

Silence can feel uncomfortable, but it's very important. Silence and space allows someone to think and respond in their own time.

Don't make false promises or minimise someone's pain

Some things to avoid saying (even if you have good intentions):

- Calm down
- It's all in your head
- I promise everything will be fine
- It's really not a big deal
- I know how you feel
- There's always someone worse off than you

Offer information about services

There are lots of support services out there that you can help someone access – don't worry about having all the answers