

# How to have a safe and supportive kōrero



Connecting with others is important, especially if you've noticed someone you care about hasn't been themselves lately. You might have noticed a change in their behaviour, in the things they are doing (or not doing) or saying (or not saying). You may have noticed them withdrawing from things they would normally enjoy.

You might feel worried you'll say or do the wrong thing, but showing care and empathy can make a real difference. Often, the most important thing you can do is simply be there for them.

*Give the person your time, and be present without judgement.*

## Self check in

Before you open the kōrero, **it's important to put on your own oxygen mask first.** Supporting someone you care about through a tough time can be challenging. You will need to look after your own wellbeing so you have the energy, time and perspective to be there for them, too. Make sure you take time for yourself, and get the support you need as well.



## Before the kōrero

- **How are you connected to the person you're worried about?** Are you a hoamahi/colleague, manager, hoa/friend, whānau member or romantic partner, for example? To open the kōrero at work, see our [Open Minds e-learning programme](#).
- **Are you the right person to open the kōrero with them,** or is there someone else who is better placed? Could you talk to them about it?

- *If you are the right person, find somewhere relaxing, quiet and private to have the kōrero.* Have the kōrero kanohi ki te kanohi/face-to-face, if possible.
- *Timing is important – it's best not to open the kōrero when the person is busy doing something else.* It can be easier to start a kōrero when you're already doing something relaxing together, such as going for a hīkoi/walk. Avoid opening the kōrero at times when you're stressed or busy, so that you have the time and patience to give your best to it.



## Opening and having the kōrero

It's important to give the person you're supporting the space and opportunity to open up at their own pace.

If the person isn't up to talking, don't force the kōrero. Let them know that you're there to kōrero whenever they are ready.

### You can have a kōrero by:

- *Just opening it.* There's no right way to start, but an open-ended pātai/question such as "I've noticed you're not yourself lately, anything up?" can work well.
- *Listening carefully to how they describe their experiences* and asking open ended questions to keep the conversation going.

- **Asking them about how they're feeling and sharing how you're feeling.** This takes the pressure off the conversation and can help your loved one feel they're contributing and have advice of their own to share.
- **Validating their feelings.** Try to see things from their point of view and understand what might be causing their feelings. Accept your loved one's experiences as real and true for them.
- **Echoing back what you're hearing.** During your kōrero, it's important to repeat key points your whānau member or loved one is saying. This will help to clarify what you're hearing and help you both to come up with some steps to get them support if they need it.

Remember you don't need to have all the answers or 'fix' their problems. Don't try to diagnose what they're experiencing, second-guess their feelings, or be too quick to offer solutions. Just listen and ask them how you can best support their needs. For more information and tips visit our [Supporting Others](#) page.

*The small, simple things can help, and just being there for them is probably helping a lot.*



If your loved one needs more support than you can give, that's okay. Make sure you don't take on the role of a professional counsellor or be someone's only support. See the following page for a list of services that you can turn to for help.

## Where to turn for support

If you've had a kōrero with someone and you think they need further tautoko/support, or if you're worried about yourself, it's okay, there is help available – no one should go through a tough time alone.

The best first point of contact is to visit a GP. You could offer to help the person make the appointment and/or attend with them. A GP can help assess what further support might be needed.

Below is a list of some of the services available that offer support, information and help. All services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week unless otherwise specified.

If you think someone may be suicidal, ask them. It could save their life. Talking about suicide will not put the thought in their head. Visit '[Suicide: worried about someone?](#)' for more information and support, and guidance on what to do if you are worried about someone's immediate safety.

### In crisis

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 111.

Or:

- Go to your nearest hospital emergency department (ED)
- Phone your local Mental Health Crisis Team (CATT Team)

Visit [mentalhealth.org.nz/help](https://mentalhealth.org.nz/help) for more guidance.

### National helplines

**Need to talk?** Free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor

**Lifeline** – 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text 4357 (HELP)

**Suicide Crisis Helpline** – 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)

**Youthline** – Free text 234, free call 0800 376 633, webchat at [youthline.co.nz](https://youthline.co.nz), DM on Instagram @youthlinenz, message on Whats App 09 886 56 96

For more information on how to support someone you care about or to order or download free resources visit [mentalhealth.org.nz](https://mentalhealth.org.nz)

Remember it's okay to get support for yourself when you're supporting someone you care about. **Yellow Brick Road** provides support for the loved ones of people experiencing mental distress or illness.