

# 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 withdraw from things they would normally enjoy. Here's some advice if you find yourself having a kōrero with someone who's going through a tough time.

## Setting the scene

- **Who is the person you're concerned about, and who are you in relation to them?** Are you a colleague, manager, 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 you know who is better placed? Who would that be? Could you talk to them about it?
- **If you are the right person, find somewhere relaxing, quiet and private to have the kōrero.** Have it 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 also feeling distressed, stressed or busy, so that you have the time and patience to give your best to it.



## Opening and having the kōrero

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, so it's important to look after your own wellbeing so you have the energy, time and perspective to be there for them, too.

### 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.
- **Giving someone space** and the opportunity to open up at their own pace. If your loved one is not up to talking, allow them the time and space to work through their thoughts on their own terms. Let them know that you are ready to kōrero whenever they feel comfortable to do so.
- **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 echo or 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.
- **Trying not to 'fix' their problems.** It's better to accept our loved ones instead of trying to rescue them. Remember that small, simple things can help, and that just being there for your whānau or hoa/friend is probably helping a lot.

Your kōrero may stop here, or it may lead to more kōrero. If it leads to more kōrero, it's important to consider whether the person would like your support, and whether you are the right person to offer that support. Make sure you don't take on the role of a professional counsellor or be someone's sole support person. See the following page for a list of services that you can turn to for help.

**Remember to look after yourself.** Being there for someone else can be tough, so make sure you take some time for yourself, and get the support you need too.

# Where to turn for support

If you've had a kōrero with someone and you think they need further tautoko, 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 your GP/tākuta or offer to attend an appointment with your friend or whānau member. A GP can help assess what further support might be needed.

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

## In crisis

If you or someone you know has immediate safety concerns, please dial 111 or contact your local mental health crisis assessment team, which you can find at [mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines](https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines).

## 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 call 0800 376 633 or free text 234 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), or get in touch via [webchat](#) between 10am and 10pm

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.