

Guide to starting a conversation about your mental health

If you're going through a tough time, either at work or in your personal life, sharing how you're feeling with someone you trust can make a big difference.

Reach out to a trusted whānau member, friend, HR professional, manager, general practitioner (GP), or another healthcare professional.



Talking about thoughts and feelings can be hard. You may feel unsure about opening up, worry about being a burden, or feel embarrassed. But asking for support is a brave and important step towards feeling better.

It can be hard to know where to start, and it's okay to feel nervous. Here are some top tips to help you with your conversation.

1 Prepare for the conversation

It can be helpful to write down how you've been feeling or what's been happening for you, especially if you find it hard to put your thoughts into words.

2 Check in with the person you want to speak to

Before sharing how you're feeling, it's a good idea to check whether the other person is in the right space to listen and support you. This helps to make the conversation feel safe and supportive for you both. You might say:

"There's something I'm struggling with that I'd really like to talk to you about. Is that okay, and when is a good time?"

Asking this gives the person the opportunity to let you know if they're able to be present and listen to you.

If you're planning to talk to a manager or someone from HR in your workplace, it can help to schedule a time. That way, you know they're available, focused, and not juggling other tasks.

3 Choose a time and place that feels right

It's best to have this type of conversation somewhere you both feel comfortable. Depending on your situation, this might be at home, in a quiet cafe, on a walk, online or even on a drive together.

Try to pick a time when neither of you is rushed or distracted. This makes it easier to talk more openly, and to feel heard.



4 Explain how you've been feeling

When you're ready to have a conversation, try to be as honest and clear as possible. By sharing some details, you're helping the other person to understand what's been going on for you, and how you've been feeling.

It can be hard to begin the conversation.
Try starting with:

"Lately, I've been feeling..."
"I think it started when..."
"I've been feeling this for a while..."
"I'm thinking about..."

It's okay if you get upset during the conversation. Opening up takes courage and speaking about how you feel is a brave thing to do.

If you've planned to hurt yourself or take your own life, please share this information with someone you trust so they can support you to get the help you need. Visit our [Suicide Prevention](#) and [Help](#) pages for more guidance.

5 Work out next steps

Consider how the person can best support you after you've talked. You might ask them to:

- check in with you often or meet for regular walks / meetings
- attend a GP appointment with you
- offer workplace support with reasonable accommodations (e.g. altering work conditions, providing training, reducing workload)
- help with daily tasks like picking up groceries, looking after your children, or helping with household chores.

Try to find a balance between what feels helpful for you and achievable for them. This is also a good time to thank them for listening and being there for you.



If the conversation doesn't go the way you hoped, that's okay. Sometimes people don't know how to respond or may feel uncomfortable talking about mental health.

Try not to let one tough conversation put you off. Keep reaching out until you find someone who can really listen and support you. Don't forget you can also talk to a counsellor, an EAP provider, your GP, or contact a free helpline. Help is available.

Our free, evidence-based suicide prevention and wellbeing [resources](#) offer best-practice, evidence-based guidance and practical information.

Need extra support?

Sometimes we may need more than a kōrero or a resource. Reaching out for extra help is a strong and healthy thing to do.

Talk to your GP or a counsellor, or connect with a free, confidential helpline.

- **Need to talk?** – free call or text 1737 for support from a trained counsellor (24/7)
- **Youthline** 0800 37 66 33 or free text 234 (24/7)
- **Lifeline** 0800 54 33 54 or free text 4357 (HELP) (7am – midnight)

For more free helplines and support services visit our [Helplines](#) page.

Need Help Now?

If you're worried about your own, or someone else's, immediate safety:

- Call 111, if someone is in immediate danger to themselves or others.

OR

- Go to the emergency department at your nearest hospital.
- Call your local mental health crisis assessment team (CATT). Find details on our [Help](#) page.