

Mental Health Conversation Checklist: A Guide for All Ages

Creating Safe, Supportive Conversations That Promote Healing and Connection

At Harmony in Daily Happiness Foundation, we believe that open, compassionate conversations create space for healing, understanding, and emotional wellness. Use this checklist to help guide supportive mental health conversations with children, teens, and adults.

This guide focuses on listening, connection, and creating emotional safety — not having all the answers.

Before the Conversation — Prepare Yourself

- ✓ Choose a private, comfortable setting
- ✓ Give your full attention (limit distractions like phones or devices)
- ✓ Approach the conversation with empathy, not judgment
- ✓ Be calm and emotionally present
- ✓ Let go of the need to “fix” the problem
- ✓ Be open to listening more than speaking
- ✓ Remind yourself that your role is support, not solutions

Mindset Reminder:

Connection matters more than perfect words.

Starting the Conversation

- ✓ Check in with care and concern
- ✓ Use gentle, open language
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions
- ✓ Express genuine interest
- ✓ Avoid pressure or forcing conversation

Helpful Conversation Starters:

- “How have you been feeling lately?”
- “I care about you and wanted to check in.”

- “You seem overwhelmed — do you want to talk?”
- “How can I support you right now?”

During the Conversation — Active Listening

- ✓ Listen without interrupting
- ✓ Maintain eye contact and open body language
- ✓ Allow silence when needed
- ✓ Validate feelings (“That sounds really hard.”)
- ✓ Reflect what you hear (“It sounds like you’re feeling...”)
- ✓ Respect their experience, even if you don’t fully understand
- ✓ Ask clarifying questions gently
- ✓ Show patience and understanding

Remember: Being heard can be more healing than being advised.

Responding With Support

- ✓ Show empathy and compassion
- ✓ Acknowledge their emotions as valid
- ✓ Avoid minimizing or dismissing feelings
- ✓ Offer reassurance without false promises
- ✓ Thank them for sharing
- ✓ Reinforce that they are not alone

Supportive Phrases:

- “I’m here for you.”
- “Thank you for sharing this with me.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “We can figure this out together.”

What to Avoid

- ✗ Interrupting or talking over them
- ✗ Giving immediate advice or solutions
- ✗ Saying “just stay positive” or “it will pass”
- ✗ Comparing their experience to others
- ✗ Judging or criticizing
- ✗ Making the conversation about yourself
- ✗ Dismissing feelings as unimportant
- ✗ Trying to control the outcome

Encouraging Healthy Coping

- ✓ Ask what helps them feel better
- ✓ Encourage healthy coping strategies
- ✓ Suggest supportive activities if appropriate:
 - Deep breathing or relaxation
 - Physical activity
 - Creative expression
 - Talking with trusted people
 - ✓ Support their choices when safe and healthy

Encouraging Professional Support (When Needed)

- ✓ Recognize when additional help may be helpful
- ✓ Suggest professional support gently and respectfully
- ✓ Normalize seeking help as a sign of strength
- ✓ Offer to help find resources or support services
- ✓ Avoid pressure or ultimatums

Helpful Language:

- “You don’t have to go through this alone.”
- “Talking to a professional can really help.”
- “I can help you find support if you’d like.”

For Children — Extra Considerations

- ✓ Use simple, age-appropriate language
- ✓ Help them name emotions
- ✓ Be reassuring and calm
- ✓ Use examples, stories, or play
- ✓ Validate feelings even when behavior needs correction

For Teens — Extra Considerations

- ✓ Respect their independence and privacy
- ✓ Avoid lecturing or judging
- ✓ Choose relaxed, natural settings
- ✓ Ask permission before giving advice
- ✓ Give space while staying available

For Adults — Extra Considerations

- ✓ Respect personal boundaries
- ✓ Avoid assumptions about their experience
- ✓ Support autonomy in decision-making
- ✓ Encourage ongoing support and connection

After the Conversation — Follow Up

- ✓ Check in again later
- ✓ Continue offering support
- ✓ Respect confidentiality
- ✓ Encourage ongoing communication
- ✓ Celebrate progress and positive steps

Healing happens through consistent connection.

When Talking About Mental Health:

- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Validate
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Encourage help
- ✓ Follow up

Creating a Culture of Compassion

At Harmony in Daily Happiness Foundation, we believe that every conversation can create hope, strengthen connection, and support emotional wellbeing. When we listen with empathy and speak with kindness, we help ensure no one feels alone in their mental health journey.

