

Say This Not That

Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement encourages everyone to check in with loved ones on their mental health. Talking openly and honestly about mental health lets those we care about know that we support them. The following phrases can be used to create meaningful conversation with someone experiencing a mental health challenge. Before starting a conversation with someone you are concerned about be sure to have resources on hand, including local county mental health department numbers and suicide crisis resources.

| Say This | Not That |
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| I'm deeply concerned about you and I want you to know that help is available to get you through this. | Cheer up; I'm sure it will pass. |
| Comments such as "it will pass" can make a person feel worse. Let the person know you care. Letting them know that you take their situation seriously, and you are genuinely concerned about them, will go a long way in your effort to support them. | |
| I am someone who cares and wants to listen. What do you want me to know about how you are feeling? | Stop feeling sorry for yourself. |
| It's important to learn to separate the disorder from the person you love. Comments like this blame the individual for their feelings. | |
| It seems like you are going through a difficult time. I want you to know you're not alone in this. | There's always someone worse off than you are. |
| Ensure that your loved ones feel supported. A negative comment like this can make the person feel as though their feelings are insignificant. | |
| I can't really understand what you are feeling, but I can offer my compassion and find you help. | Believe me, I know how you feel. I was depressed once for several days. |
| Avoid saying you know how they feel as it invalidates their experience. | |
| I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about suicide? | You're not thinking about killing yourself are you? (said in a joking manner) |
| Ask directly about suicide. Talking about suicide does not put the idea in someone's head and usually they are relieved. Asking directly and using the word "suicide" establishes that you and the person at risk are talking about the same thing and lets the person know that you are willing to talk about suicide. | |
| I care about you too much to keep a secret like this. You need help and I am here to help you get it. | Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Your secret is safe with me. |
| Don't promise secrecy. The person may say that they don't want you to tell anyone that they are suicidal. You may be concerned that they will be upset with you, but when someone's life is at risk, it is more important to ensure their safety. | |

Sources:
<http://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/friends-family-members/index.html>
SuicidelsPreventable.org

Funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).

