



# Starting the Conversation

*A Parent's Quick Guide*

For more information

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1 in 5 teens live with a mental health condition. So it's not just an adult problem. If you're concerned about your child's mental health, it is important to talk about it and get him/her help as soon as possible. Early intervention leads to a better long-term outcome for your child. In addition to talking with your child, you may want to speak with your child's teachers, coaches, school counselor, and friends to get their perspective on behavioral changes in your child. The following tips can help establish a supportive foundation for your conversation.

## Tips before starting the conversation:

- Check your own emotions
- Have a relaxed tone and demeanor
- Pick the right time to talk - limit the distractions
- Use age-appropriate language
- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen without judgment or the need to "fix" him/her or "talk him/her out of being depressed"
- Acknowledge his/her feelings
- Utilize a current frame of reference such as a celebrity opening up about his/her struggle with anxiety or depression or a celebrity suicide
- Don't take it personally if your child is not ready to talk when you are. Try another time.
- Let his/her answers guide your conversation
- Be comfortable with silence because s/he may be processing what s/he wants to say

# The Conversation

**Start with:** “I’ve noticed \_\_\_ and I’m concerned. What’s going on? Has something happened? ”

## Share What Concerns You

“...you’re in your room a lot...”

“...you aren’t hanging out with your friends as much...”

“...you’ve stopped playing sports/participating in chorus/band...”

## Ask Follow-up Questions

“Do you feel like I’m putting too much pressure on you?”

“How can I help you?”

“What do you think will help?”

“Are you thinking of harming yourself/others?”

## Give Supportive Statements

“It’s okay to feel this way/to cry. Together, we will get through this.”

“I want to listen. I want to help.”

“It will get better.”

“I am / We’re here for you.”

“You are not alone. I love you.”

“I’ll give you space but know that I am here if you ever want to talk.”



**Don't be afraid to talk about depression and anxiety's most serious consequence – **suicide.****