

# DO GOODERS

## HELPER GUIDE



*Women's Health & Wellbeing Services*

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# CRISIS NUMBERS



## **SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE 1300 659 467**

The SCBS provide immediate telephone counselling and support to anyone affected by suicide, including clients at risk of suicide. They offer a call back service where clients can receive up to 6 sessions of telephone counselling. They are available 24/7

## **MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSE LINE - 1300 555 788**

Available 24/7 for assessment or treatment.

## **ENTRYPOINT 1800 124 684**

Crisis and Emergency Accommodation

## **CRISIS CARE - 9223 1111**

## **DRUG & ALCOHOL SERVICE - 9267 2400**

# BEING A DO GOODER



Being a Do Gooder is about being available to listen and then helping the other person find professional support. We are hoping that by wearing a do gooders lanyard you are going to encourage conversations with colleagues and feel supported in giving them information about resources and organisations they can reach out to for help.

Mental illness has nothing to do with strength or weakness. It is a medical disorder that needs treatment in the same way an infection or broken bone needs treatment. If you need help with a mental issue, you are not weak. It is really BRAVE to ask for help, especially given the stigma that surrounds it.

Here are ten TIPS for talking about Mental Health.

# PRIVACY

Choosing a space that is away from other people and where you are unlikely to be interrupted is really important. Sometimes doing something else, like walking or having a cuppa can help conversation flow more naturally. Not having to worry about maintaining eye contact and getting out in the fresh air and sunshine can make it feel more comfortable and allows for the pauses in conversation that WILL happen to be less awkward.

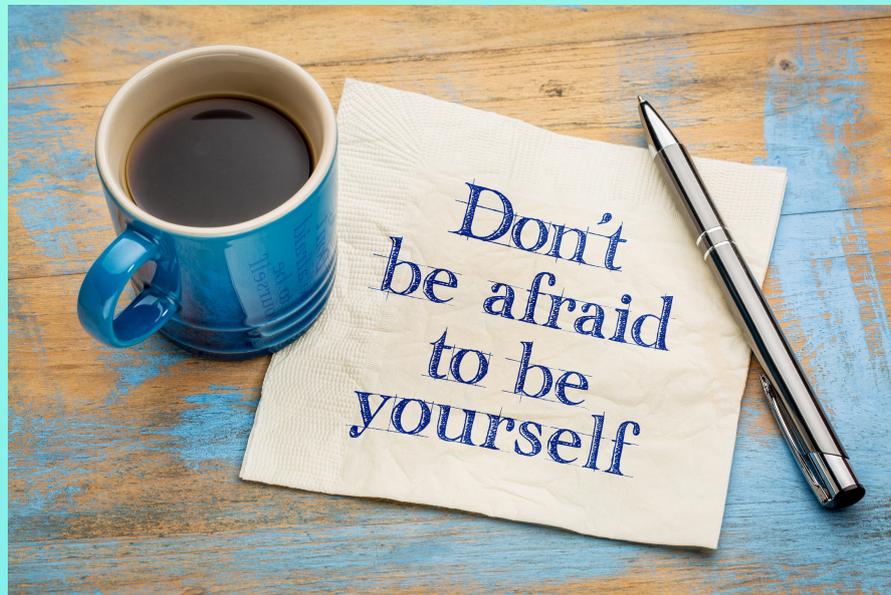
It is important that you don't turn what you've been told into gossip. If someone has talked to you about their mental health it was probably tough for them to work up the nerve to say something in the first place and so you shouldn't share what they tell you with other people. The exceptions are if they ask you to talk to someone else OR there is a threat to themselves or someone else. For example, if they tell you they are feeling suicidal. If you are with someone who has expressed suicidal thoughts, or you are concerned for their safety don't leave the person alone and seek immediate professional help.

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

# TIME



Allow enough time, if someone approaches you to talk but you have a meeting in ten minutes it would be difficult to have a meaningful conversation. In cases like this I would suggest letting the person know that YOU are available to chat, but under a time crunch right now. Then suggest a time, in the VERY NEAR future that the conversation could take place. It can be really hard to predict how long a conversation about mental health might take, but I would, for arguments sake, allow at least half an hour.

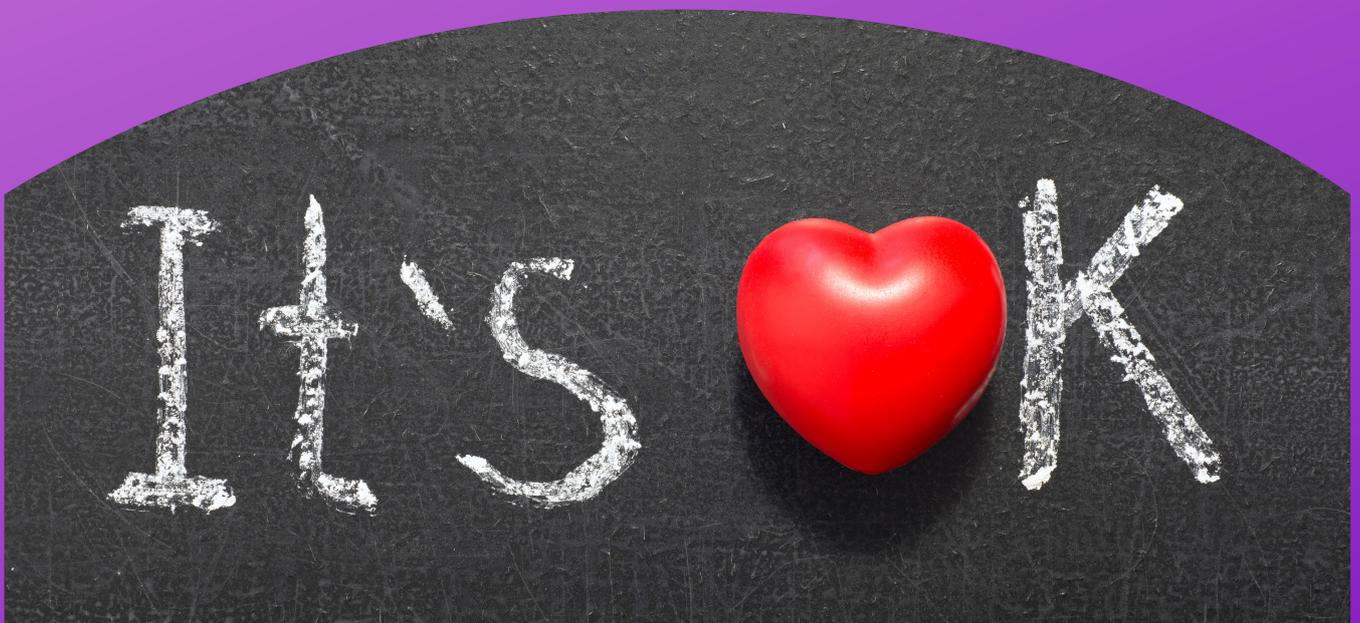


# BE YOURSELF

When someone comes to you to talk about their mental health you should keep in mind that they have decided that you are a person that they can talk to. So just be yourself. Don't treat them differently and don't suddenly start acting like a different person. Mental health issues are REALLY common. Don't treat them like they are weird and don't be weird yourself. Just as importantly after the conversation you should act normal around them! Ask how they are when you see them, check in with them but make sure to do it discreetly.

# EMBRACE FEELING AWKWARD

It is likely that there will be silences. During conversation it is natural to want to fill the silences or gaps. When someone is talking about THEIR mental health it is important to resist this urge. It is likely that their thoughts will be jumbled, so they might NEED the silence to work through the feelings they are experiencing. Resist the natural temptation to offer solutions, give advice, make assumptions, or diagnose their problem. The most helpful thing you can do is listen!



# LISTEN.... REALLY LISTEN

Quite often when we are having a conversation we are half-listening. We are listening enough to get the gist of what the other person is saying while working out what we are going to say next. Resist the urge to do this too.

GREAT listening involves listening to UNDERSTAND rather than listening to respond. Sometimes, people don't need a response, they need to know that you are hearing what they are saying, without judging or trying to 'fix' them

So, don't try to problem solve. At this stage in the conversation don't try to solve the problem FOR them. Just take what they are saying seriously.



# HOLD SPACE



To hold space is to sit with what IS without trying to CHANGE or FIX it. It involves letting go of judgement and being FULLY present with whatever emerges without trying to control what might happen.....

Sometimes the best thing we can do for someone is to simply BE WITH them. By holding space for someone you are giving them the opportunity to feel less alone, allowing them to feel their feelings and listening to them with the intention of understanding them.

Holding space allows the person speaking to experience their feelings, without you trying to talk them out of feeling a certain way.

# BE PREPARED FOR AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

As mentioned before part of this process is allowing emotions to happen. Emotions can be complicated and confusing or even conflicting. Encourage and allow the person to express their feelings and let them out. Allowing people to talk about their feelings can, and often does lead to strong emotional responses, so it is good to be prepared. Don't take the other person's feelings personally. They might get sad, or angry.

If the person begins to cry, sit quietly, and LET THEM!!! You can wait a little while and say "I'm going to stay here with you and when you are ready we can keep talking'.... You don't need to DO anything to make them stop crying.

There is a psychological phenomenon that is interesting to keep in mind here. It is called the 90 second rule. Basically, when we experience emotions, in particular the more uncomfortable feelings, if we allow them to just happen they last about 90 seconds. IF we try to suppress or smother them they magnify. Give the person some time to feel their feelings.

# MAKE A PLAN



You don't want to have a tricky conversation and leave the person hanging. That is where it is important to make a plan. When someone has confided in you they are likely to be concerned about what might happen next. BUT a really big tip is that YOU don't need to know the solution. You might want to go away and look up some of the resources we have added on here for places to access help. Make a plan to check in with them again.

If they would like to see their GP you could offer to help them book the appointment, and even offer to go with them.

# THANK THEM & REASSURE THEM

Thank the person for trusting you enough to have a difficult conversation with you. They have confided in you about something that can leave them feeling really vulnerable. So, reassure them that you will treat them respectfully, that their confidence is not misplaced, and you do not view them differently because of what they have said. Reassure them that you want to help them find support.



# THE LAST ONE..... SELFCARE.

Looking after yourself is just as important as looking out for other people. Self-care is a really wide topic but some ideas are talking with a friend or loved one about how YOU are feeling. Eating well and exercising, limiting alcohol and other drugs. Practicing mindfulness or meditation. And things like breathing and grounding exercises.



THANK

THANK  
YOU!



YOU!