

#TIMETOTALK

**HOW TO
ENCOURAGE
CONVERSATIONS
ON MENTAL HEALTH
IN BLACK
HOUSEHOLDS**

**BLACK
MINDS
MATTER^{UK}**

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HOW TO ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS ON MENTAL HEALTH IN BLACK HOUSEHOLDS

Encouraging those close to us to speak about their mental health can be difficult. Especially when cultural stigma and institutional racism have prevented us from feeling like we can't engage in these conversations or trust the health services that are designed to support us.

For this **#TimeToTalk** Day, we've put together some tips on how we can approach conversations on mental health in Black households; challenging the stigma on Black mental health and allowing for honest and safe discussions within our homes and friendship circles.

The below resources are designed to guide your conversations but are not to be used in place of professional mental health support or services. For immediate mental health support and advice please see our **"useful contacts"** resource.

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1.

Check in:

Make time to check in on your loved ones. This could be a family member, friend or partner. Make the time to hold space for the conversation, ensuring you also have the emotional capacity to engage in the conversation in a compassionate way.

Some things to think about:

Time and environment: a relaxed setting is important when engaging in conversations about our mental health. Assess where and when you think is the best time and place to have the conversation.

2.

Engage & be present:

It's important that we are present and engaged in the conversation. Avoid distractions such as your phone and give the person you're speaking with your full attention.

3.

Show compassion:

It's important to recognise that this discussion may not be something your loved one is familiar with having. They may not have been afforded the space to think deeply about their mental health and acknowledge their needs in an open way. Try to be mindful of this and show compassion about their personal experience.

4.

Use open ended questions:

You can use open ended questions such as the below to guide your conversation:

- **What were conversations on mental health like when you were growing up?**
- **How have you been coping with these struggles over the years?**
- **Is there anything I can do to support you?**

These are all great ways to not only show interest but to also further understand your loved one's own experiences of mental health.

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5.

Listen and share experiences :

Consider the ways you can relate and also consider where there may be differences in your experiences. Recognising both allows us to engage and learn from each other.

6.

Have patience:

Allow them to say as much or as little as they want to. This may not be the time they want to open up and so being mindful and respectful of that is also important.

7.

Reassure:

Reassuring our loved ones that they are allowed to speak about their mental health, and to feel no shame about it is important in creating a safe and honest environment. If this is the first time you have engaged in a conversation on mental health with this person, then be sure to reassure them that they can speak to you again, the same way they have today.

8.

Avoid trying to diagnose them:

The likelihood is that you're not a trained professional and so avoid trying to diagnose them. This could make them feel scared and worried. If you're wanting to offer advice, it could be worth mentioning safe vices and tips that you may have tried yourself and instead speaking from your own personal experience.

9.

Continue to be there for them:

Make a conscious effort to check in on your loved one more frequently; letting them know that you are there to support them.

It's important to remember that Mental health is more than just mental illness, it is our overall state of wellbeing, including both positive and negative emotions. Whilst we're all guaranteed to experience poor mental health at some point in our lives, it is the way in which we recognise and manage these emotions that determine the extent of our experiences. Having open and honest conversations can encourage people to seek support and reduce the feelings of shame within our community.

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