



ADVANCING SCIENCE AND PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

Tips for Providing Support to Others During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

The table below provides some simple strategies and sentence stems to help engage others in supportive conversations about their stress reactions during the Covid-19 outbreak. Use the table to identify potential ways to show empathy and care, adapting them to match your personality and relationship. Remember, you don't have to provide perfect support. Often the person just needs to know that someone cares enough to check on them and to listen if they are able to talk about what they are grappling with. Even a short conversation can be helpful in conveying that the person is not alone and that someone cares about them.

Ways To Encourage Discussion	Examples
<i>Behaviors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk • Show interest, attention, and care • Let them talk without interruption as much as is possible • Be free of expectations or judgments • Just be with them and let them know they're not alone • Share your own ways of dealing with or reframing similar experiences • Help them brainstorm solutions and weigh choices to make decisions • Help them think through what meaning their experiences hold for them • Remind them of their strengths / values • Offer to talk any time they need, as is possible
<i>Reflective Comments</i> (Lets the person know that you are aware of how they are feeling, and can encourage emotional expression)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It sounds like..." • "From what you're saying, I can see how you would be...." • "It sounds like you're saying...." • "You seem really...." • Make sure your reflections are correct by using sentences like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Tell me if I'm wrong ... it sounds like you ..." ○ "Am I right when I say that you ..."

<i>Supportive Comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "No wonder you feel..." • "It sounds really hard..." • "It sounds like you're being hard on yourself..." • "It is such a tough thing to go through something like this." • "I'm really sorry this is such a tough time for you." • "We can talk more tomorrow if you'd like..."
<i>Empowering Comments / Questions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What have you done in the past to make yourself better when things got difficult?" • "Are there any things that you think would help you to feel better?" • "Maybe there is a different way of looking at this that would help you move forward or have less guilt/shame/anger...." • "People can be very different in what helps them to feel better. When things got difficult for me, it helped me to..... Would something like that work for you?"

Table 2 adapted from Brymer M, Jacobs A, Layne C, Pynoos R, Ruzek J, Steinberg A, Vernberg E, Watson P, (National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD), Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide, 2nd Edition. July, 2006. Available on: www.nctsn.org and www.ncptsd.va.gov.