

Little tips for helping someone open up when something's up

When someone is carrying around worries and difficult feelings, it can feel very lonely

Having someone there to listen can help them work through what's going on and feel better able to cope.

You don't have to be an expert to help someone open up when something's up. The fact that you care is what matters.

Here are some tips to help you spot when something might be up, open up a conversation and be a good listener.

1 How to spot when something might be up

These are some of the signs that someone may not be okay:

- Not wanting to do things they usually enjoy.
- Finding everyday things overwhelming.
- Not replying to messages, or being distant.
- Avoiding people or seeming quiet.
- Appearing restless or agitated.
- Easily tearful.
- Drinking or using drugs to cope with feelings.

2 How to open up a conversation

Don't be shy to ask how someone's feeling:

- Choose a good time, and somewhere without distractions.
- Use open questions that need more than a yes/no answer.
- 'How are things? I've noticed you don't seem quite yourself.'
- Listen well. 'How's that making you feel?'
- Avoid giving your view of what's wrong, or what they should do.

3 How to be a good listener

Showing you care builds trust to open up:

- Make eye contact and put away your phone.
- Focus completely on the other person.
- Pauses are fine, try not to jump in to fill a silence.
- Say back what you think it is they are wanting you to hear.
- Resist putting your own interpretation on it.
- Don't give up. Sometimes it can take a few tries!

4 How to help someone get more help

If it feels like the person is really struggling to cope:

- 'Would you like to get some help?'
- 'Have you tried your GP?'
- 'Would you like me to come with you?'
- 'Did you know you don't have to be feeling suicidal to call Samaritans?'
- 'Samaritans is free, 24 hours a day if you're feeling low or worried too.'
- 'If it helps, you can talk to me any time.'

Supporting someone in distress can be distressing

Samaritans is here for anyone who needs someone to listen.

Call free day or night on
116 123
Email
jo@samaritans.org

SAMARITANS