

BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

FACT SHEET: TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA WITH A FRIEND (FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC)



HOW TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH A FRIEND YOU KNOW OR SUSPECT MAY EXPERIENCE INTERPERSONAL TRAUMA

Friends, even close friends cannot always tell that their friend has experienced or is experiencing interpersonal trauma. Nor will your friend necessarily confide in you.

Potentially difficult conversations become easier when we are trauma-informed i.e. follow the principles of *safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment* and understand better whether we should speak up and what to say.

- Depending on the nature and level of your friendship, you can have this conversation quite naturally if you start by asking: *'are you okay?'*
- If your concern is brushed aside or dismissed, and you are still concerned, 'ask a second time'. At this point you may need to be more direct, while staying empathic and diplomatic. *'Are you sure? I'm not wanting to fish for details but I'm concerned that sometimes you may not be okay and I know it's easy to brush these sorts of questions aside. But you're my friend and I'm feeling a bit worried about you.'*
- Avoid making it seem like an 'intervention' if you can. It could throw the person off balance and make them retreat rather than feel comfortable to confide in you. If, on the other hand, you feel concerned around their prior rejection of your less formal approach, an intervention may be needed. Depending on the circumstances, you may need to involve others.
- 'Choose your moment' where possible.
- Respect your friend's preferences re time, location and setting.
- Both physical and emotional safety are critical.
- Engage in 'quality listening' and be sensitive to non-verbal communication e.g. facial expressions, posture.
- Take a non-judgmental attitude; validate the person.
- Avoid shaming the person for any 'problematic' behaviours they might have adopted to protect themselves.



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To read the full paper: Talking About Trauma - Guide to Everyday Conversations for the General Public

<https://www.blueknot.org.au/ABOUT-US/Our-Documents/Publications/Talking-Trauma-Public>

You might also find our other fact sheets in this series helpful as they provide tips around talking about trauma with different people (family, colleagues, someone you don't know).

For general information please see:

- *Fact Sheet: Talking about Trauma – Having Safe Conversations (For General Public)*
- *Fact Sheet: Talking about Trauma – Applying Trauma-Informed Principles (For General Public)*



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