

Mental Health Conversations don't have to be scary.

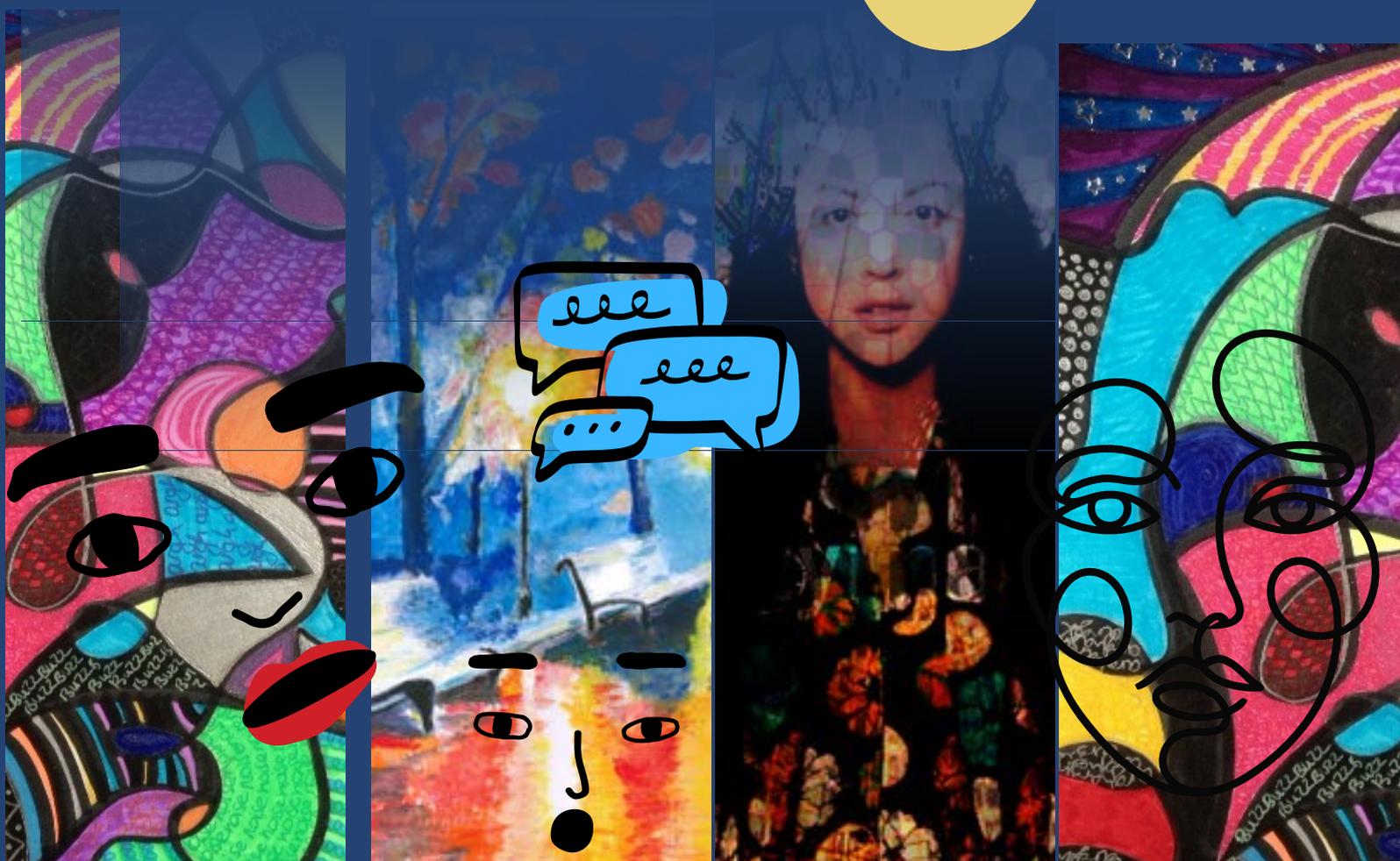


Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance - Stamp it Out

Time to Talk day 2026

Created by

SIO Ambassadors and
DMWA service users.

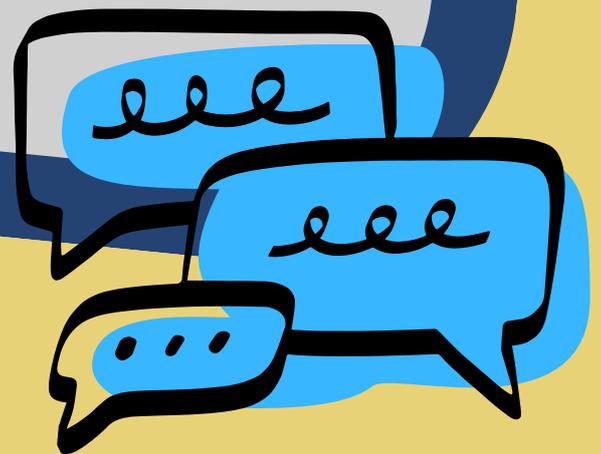


Introduction

If you are worried about someone's mental health, or something has happened which may affect their wellbeing (like a bereavement or relationship break down), it can feel like you don't know what to do. This may be because you don't know where to start or you worry that you might make things worse. However, we can assure that doing something is better than doing nothing.

People who have lived experience of mental health and people who are passionate about mental health have worked together to produce this guide.

We hope you'll find it useful!





It's important to start by saying that some people who struggle with their mental Health might also find it hard to ask for help.

We can struggle to ask for help for a variety of reasons: shame, embarrassment, fear of judgement, not having the right words, poor past experiences.

Here are some top tips for getting help:

If you don't have people around you for support there are telephone or text support services that can help:

Samaritans 24hrs telephone support 116123
Shout - 24hrs text support - text Shout to 85258

If you find it hard to ask can you create a code or a symbol to let someone know you need support. Maybe you could agree something with someone you trust.

Try to be direct if possible - "I'm struggling with my mental health just now, I'd appreciate it if you had some time to listen" or "I'm feeling very anxious at the moment, can I share some stuff I have going on?"

Be clear - do you just want someone to listen or someone to advise. These are very different things.

Write things down - Can you share how you feel in a letter, an email, a text or even a piece of creative writing.

Environment is everything - Finding the right time and place. Choose somewhere you feel safe and comfortable.

Try to describe your symptoms or emotions - I'm feeling angry, I'm feeling lost, I feel like I can't cope with.... I'm not sleeping because I'm worrying a lot at the moment, I feel like I don't want to be around people.

Please don't worry. You are not wasting people's time: create a mantra (a phrase you repeat to yourself) - I am worthy of help and people do care.

If you want to help people who are struggling:

Listen- Allow the person to lead the conversation. Try not to interrupt and be encouraging when they share their feelings, you can do this by nodding or repeating phrases to ensure you've understood. This will make people feel that you care. Don't make judgements, sharing is hard. Don't give advice if the person hasn't asked for it - we know you just want to fix the 'problem' but at the moment the person probably just needs to offload and share.

Communicate on their level - take time to understand what is comfortable for the person. Is text or email better? would they appreciate a walk and talk (not having eye contact can help) Talking over a meal or a cuppa can make a difference, can you garden, bake, draw, colour or craft with someone as you chat?

If you are in a workplace or community space, create an area, a bench or some other symbol which will let people know support is needed.

Avoid labels - If you are not a Dr don't diagnose. Remember there is a difference between Mental Health and Mental Illness. We all have mental health, only some of us have mental illness.

Respect readiness - Not everyone finds talking or sharing easy. Keep checking in with people. Don't give up on them (they have probably experienced this before.) But also, don't be pushy. Steady wins the race!

Believe people - It is important for people to feel believed. Most people with mental health problems would say they are pretending to be well not pretending to have needs.

Try not to judge by your own standards - we are all different, we have to find our own way. Feeling we should cope or be better because other are, only adds more pressure.

Ask twice - people often say fine when they are not. Ask again "are you really ok?" People are more likely to share if they think you care.

Thanks !

