

What is a mental health conversation?

- A mental health conversation essentially entails conversations about one's mental health, any issues or distresses that an individual is experiencing at the moment. The conversation also entails details about the actions that can be taken to improve the situation [\[1\]](#)
- Even though we have come a long way, in destigmatising mental health and talking about mental health openly, we still might find it difficult to start a conversation about mental health especially to our parents [\[2\]](#).
- Sometimes starting a mental health conversation can be a daunting task especially because it was something that was not talked about 20 years ago and therefore has a lot of stigma and ignorance attached to it. In such a situation, we all can use some tips to kick start the conversation.

Why is it important to talk about mental health to your parents?

- Being the primary caregiver, sometimes parents can be the most important source of support for a teenager who is going through mental health issues [\[3\]](#).
- Additionally, talking openly about mental health issues to people with whom you are spending a lot of time, can be cathartic and can give a person more clarity on how to deal with the issue. With the help of the parents, resources can be accessed and support can be received which will lead to the teenager solving challenging problems effectively [\[4\]](#).
- When facing a difficult situation, sometimes important relationships may take the brunt of the stress we undergo. Therefore, talking them through and receiving support will mend and strengthen existing relationships [\[5\]](#).

10 tips for mental health conversation starters.

1. Write down and rehearse- Talking about the challenges or difficulties can be quite overwhelming and therefore writing it down and rehearsing it in front of a mirror helps^[6].
2. There is nothing wrong with you- Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, rather a sign of strength. Asking for help is a sign of resilience and you will be able to bounce back from the issue faster^[7].
3. Communicate how mental health impacts other aspects- Mental health like physical health affects our quality of life, therefore communicate clearly how mental health is affecting other arenas of life like academics or relation with friends^[8].
4. Speak to other parents who support mental health- By speaking to a parent, one does not feel alone and also provides an alternate angle to approach parents^[9].
5. It is not their fault- Parents may not react the way we expect them. Know that, it is not their fault. If required try again and talk to them about how you think the problem is and how it is affecting you ^[10].
6. Don't get angry if they respond negatively- Parents might be having stressors of their own and therefore sometimes our voices of concern may not reach them. While approaching them, make sure they are calm and rested and are peaceful ^[11]. Choose a comfortable environment.
7. When parents won't support- There might be situations where parents won't respond favourably to what we are saying. While such an experience can be painful, talk about how you are at least interested in meeting a professional and if possible show some screening tests or assessments that show how much help you require. Parents might be dismissive because of fear or ignorance of the matter. Talk about the issues, explain in detail and most importantly stand up for yourself ^[12].

8. When parents might be contributing to your mental distress- Very often one or both parents might cause mental distress and might be triggering our stress or anxiety. If one parent is causing distress, talk to the other parent, if you can trust them. Reach out to a trusted adult like your aunt, cousin or maybe friends and have a discussion with them on how to talk to your parents [\[13\]](#).
9. When we feel like a burden- A lot of adolescents might feel that they are burdening their parents by talking about their mental health issues and problems. Knowing that, all of us face stress in our life and while being concerned is a good thing, it is important to stand up for yourself and reach out in the event of anguish [\[14\]](#).
10. Do not worry about messing up- Sometimes, even though we are prepared, things might not go as planned and that is completely okay. The important thing is to convey what you are feeling and not how you present it [\[15\]](#).