

## Tips For

# RESPONDING

## When Someone Confides in You

When someone shares their difficulties with you, it can be hard to know how to respond, especially if there are mental health difficulties. Here are some tips that might help.

- 1.** Don't pass judgement. If someone has trusted you enough to share something as personal as their struggles with mental health, repay that trust with kindness, empathy and support.
- 2.** Often people don't want you to do anything other than listen. They need to feel heard. In this way you validate their experience.
- 3.** If you are going to respond, say things like, "That must feel awful." "I'm sorry you are going through this, it sounds really painful." "Thank you for trusting me enough to talk to me. I'm here for you."
- 4.** Here's a list of things to **NEVER** say:
  - "That happened to me once but worse." It isn't a competition.
  - "At least you're..." (good looking, rich, loved, employed, etc) It invalidates their feelings.
  - "Cheer up" Has that ever worked in the history of time?
- 5.** If you think the person needs to take action, offer to take that action with them:
  - "We can make an appointment to see a doctor."
  - "I can drive you home and stay with you"
  - "Let's call and ask your wife/brother/partner to come around and be with you."
  - At the very least express your support of them taking action if they need to.
- 6.** If the person becomes emotional and cries, that's okay. Don't try and make them stop. Crying is a powerful form of emotional regulation. It will make them feel better physically and emotionally.
- 7.** If you don't know what to say or do, say you don't know. Err on the side of caution. You don't have to be an expert at everything. Let them know you're glad they shared with you. Acknowledge you don't know what to do or say, but that you want to do whatever they think will help. If they don't know, figure it out together.

**If all else fails call a helpline manned by mental health experts like Lifeline Australia 13 11 14 or Kids' Helpline 1800 551 800.**