

## Talking About Mental Health Without Stigma

Mental health is part of overall health. The way we talk about mental health can affect whether people feel safe asking for help. Using respectful and supportive language helps reduce stigma and encourages open conversations.

### What is Mental Health Stigma?

Stigma happens when people are judged, blamed, or treated differently because of their mental health struggles.

Stigma can look like:

- Calling someone “crazy” or “weak”
- Making jokes about mental illness
- Avoiding conversations about mental health
- Assuming people should “just get over it”
- Treating mental health differently than physical health
- Judging someone for going to therapy or taking medication

Stigma can prevent people from reaching out for support when they need it most.

### How to Talk Supportively About Mental Health

Helpful ways to support someone include:

- Listen without interrupting or judging
- Speak respectfully and compassionately
- Use person-first language
  - Say “a person living with depression”
  - Instead of “a depressed person”
- Encourage honest conversations
- Ask how you can help
- Respect someone’s experiences, even if you do not fully understand them

#### **Wyandot Behavioral Health Network**

Website: <https://www.wyandotbhn.org/> | Phone: 913-328-4600

**In Crisis?** Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or call 913-788-4200

## Helpful Things to Say

Supportive phrases can make a big difference.

Examples include:

- “I’m here for you.”
- “Thank you for sharing this with me.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “It’s okay to ask for help.”
- “Your feelings are valid.”
- “Mental health challenges are real and treatable.”

## Things to Avoid Saying

Some comments can feel dismissive or hurtful, even when not intended that way.

Try to avoid saying:

- “Just be positive.”
- “Everyone feels stressed.”
- “You’ll get over it.”
- “It’s all in your head.”
- “Other people have it worse.”

## Why Reducing Stigma Matters

When people feel supported instead of judged, they are more likely to:

- Reach out for help early
- Talk openly about their struggles
- Build stronger support systems
- Access treatment and resources

Creating a more understanding community starts with the conversations we have every day.

### *Remember*

Mental health challenges are common, and seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

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