A guide to embrace Mental Health conversations at home.
Between balancing a career, family responsibilities, and a non-stop schedule, you may feel like you’re on a merry-go-round just trying to find your bearings each day.

While a full life can be fulfilling, it can sometimes be overwhelming, especially if anything “extra” comes up.

If you’re often feeling overwhelmed, sad, or anxious by life’s unexpected moments, it might be worth expressing your feelings in a safe place, like your home.

We’ve gathered insight from Dr. Gustavo Kinrys, a psychiatrist and advisor to Teladoc Health, on how you can foster a supportive home setting for you and loved ones to talk about mental health.
Lean into support

Many who seek therapy likely have a family member who has taken a similar proactive approach to his or her own mental health.

56% of Americans seek or want to seek mental health services for themselves or a loved one.

87% of American adults agreed that having a mental health disorder is nothing to be ashamed of.
Observing change is key to recognizing if you or a loved one might need mental health support.

Here’s what to keep an eye on:

• Excessive or persistent feelings of sadness, nervousness, or guilt
• Out-of-character irritability, anger, or agitation
• Significant changes in weight or eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
• Changes in sleeping patterns, such as sleeping considerably more or less
• Difficulty keeping up with hygiene
• Withdrawal virtually or from social situations, avoiding friends and family
• Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) in which there are no obvious medical causes
• Lack of energy, motivation, and interest in activities that once brought joy
• Using substances like alcohol or drugs to cope with stress
• Bizarre beliefs or ideas that can reflect a serious mental health condition
Observing change is key to recognizing if you or a loved one might need mental health support. Here's what to keep an eye on:

• Excessive or persistent feelings of sadness, nervousness, or guilt
• Out-of-character irritability, anger, or agitation
• Significant changes in weight or eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
• Changes in sleeping patterns, such as sleeping considerably more or less
• Difficulty keeping up with hygiene
• Withdrawal virtually or from social situations, avoiding friends and family
• Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) in which there are no obvious medical causes
• Lack of energy, motivation, and interest in activities that once brought joy
• Using substances like alcohol or drugs to cope with stress
• Bizarre beliefs or ideas that can reflect a serious mental health condition
Talking about mental health can help you or a loved one feel heard, understood, and hopeful that relief is possible. Here are some tips for getting started.

**Make sure your home values healthy communication.**
Openness and non-confrontational communication are important.

**Find a quiet location to talk.**
Find somewhere peaceful, or consider going for a walk outside. Engaging in physical activity can help reduce some of the discomfort around the conversation.

**Remove distractions like TVs, laptops, and phones.**
This helps everyone mentally prepare for a discussion.

**Show appreciation.**
A simple “Thank you for listening to me” or “Thank you for trusting me” are good places to start.
Talking about mental health can help you or a loved one feel heard, understood, and hopeful that relief is possible. Here are some tips for getting started.

Make sure your home values healthy communication. Openness and non-confrontational communication are important.

Find a quiet location to talk. Find somewhere peaceful, or consider going for a walk outside. Engaging in physical activity can help reduce some of the discomfort around the conversation.

Remove distractions like TVs, laptops, and phones. This helps everyone mentally prepare for a discussion.

Show appreciation. A simple "Thank you for listening to me" or "Thank you for trusting me" are good places to start.

How to start the conversation
You're the one who decides when, where, and how much to share about what you are going through. There's no right or wrong way to do it, nor is there a rule for who needs to know. Sharing your experience, as scary as it may be, is a great step to feeling better.

Tips to consider:
Begin however you feel most comfortable.
You might try “I have something on my mind, and I'd like to share it with you.”

Practice or write down what you’d like to say ahead of time.
It can help alleviate any worry surrounding the conversation and possibly help clarify your feelings about what you’re going through.

Explain how you’ve been feeling.
• When it started, what triggers it, what makes you feel better
• What changes you’ve noticed in your mind and/or body
• How these changes have affected your life
Set boundaries.
Let loved ones know when you want advice from them and when you want them to just listen. Also, tell them what you want them to be kept private.

Let loved ones know how they can support you.
Think about your needs ahead of time and consider what could be helpful for you.

Examples:
• “Can you help me find a therapist or psychiatrist?”
• “I’ve been leaning on alcohol too much. Can we keep it out of the house for now?”
• “Can you take a walk with me each night so we can wind down from our day?”

It’s okay not to know what support you need.
Sometimes just talking about what you’ve been going through is a step in the right direction. You don’t have to know exactly what support you need. What’s important is finding someone you feel comfortable opening up to.
Conversation tips—
offering support to a loved one

Being there to offer support and listen can make a difference to a loved one who may be experiencing a mental health challenge.

Respond with empathy.
• “What you’re going through sounds difficult.”
• “It sounds like you have a lot on your plate right now.”

Remain non-judgmental.
Do not minimize or maximize how your loved one is feeling, but reinforce the importance of not ignoring their emotions or symptoms.

Language to avoid:
• “Stop focusing on the bad stuff. Look at all the good things you have going for you.”
• “Cheer up. Things will get better eventually.”

Let them know if you “get” it.
Have you had a similar experience? Share it so they don’t feel so alone. If relevant, indicate that you or a friend or family member found therapy helpful.
Be prepared for emotional reactions.
Everyone expresses themselves in a different manner. Prepare yourself for different reactions. Allow them to express their emotions fully. Stay calm and be a good listener.

Discuss seeking professional help.
If your loved one needs someone else to talk to, offer to help connect them with a mental health professional. Lend your support by providing contact information to access care that’s right for them.

Offer ongoing support.
Let your loved one know you’re there to offer ongoing support by checking in on how they’re feeling. Remind them they can get through particularly stressful periods. Encourage them to carve out time to alleviate stress in a nurturing way (i.e., taking a bath, eating a nutritious meal, going for a walk, etc.).

Stay alert.
If there’s serious concern someone may end his or her own life or someone is engaging in self-harming behaviors (cutting or burning), get help immediately. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) is available 24/7 for free and confidential support.
Healthy tips to ensure good mental wellness

• Pay attention to how you are thinking and feeling.

• Don’t ignore what is uncomfortable.

• When stressed, use relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing, or meditation.

• Take part in activities you enjoy and feel passionate about.

• Keep a healthy diet. Avoid nicotine, artificial energy drinks, or other energy supplements.

• Surround yourself with positive emotional support.

• Engage in regular physical activity.

• Get enough shut-eye! Aim to sleep 7-9 hours per night.

• Seek mental health counseling and psychiatric care if needed.
• Pay attention to how you are thinking and feeling.
• Don’t ignore what is uncomfortable.
• When stressed, use relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing, or meditation.
• Take part in activities you enjoy and feel passionate about.
• Keep a healthy diet. Avoid nicotine, artificial energy drinks, or other energy supplements.
• Surround yourself with positive emotional support.
• Engage in regular physical activity.
• Get enough shut-eye! Aim to sleep 7-9 hours per night.
• Seek mental health counseling and psychiatric care if needed.

Healthy tips to ensure good mental wellness
© 2020 Teladoc Health, Inc.
What you can do next

Consider what mental health resources you or a loved one might be open to. There are a variety of ways to receive confidential mental healthcare with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist, whether it’s in-person sessions or virtually.

Virtual care, such as Teladoc, can provide access by phone or video to a mental health professional so you can receive guidance seven days a week from anywhere, including the comfort of home.

Many workplaces offer virtual care, like Teladoc. Human resources can provide guidance on additional resources offered. Many provide a private and non-judgmental setting to help people connect with the care they need.

“I have struggled with unresolved issues in my past, and I have always wanted to see a therapist, but my anxiety has always deterred me from doing so. Teladoc makes it so easy to get the help I need. I see a therapist once a week from the comfort of my own home and at a time that works for me. I am so thankful I have Teladoc!”

ANGE
Consider what mental health resources you or a loved one might be open to. There are a variety of ways to receive confidential mental healthcare with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist, whether it's in-person sessions or virtually.

Virtual care, such as Teladoc, can provide access by phone or video to a mental health professional so you can receive guidance seven days a week from anywhere, including the comfort of home.

Many workplaces offer virtual care, like Teladoc. Human resources can provide guidance on additional resources offered. Many provide a private and non-judgmental setting to help people connect with the care they need.

I have struggled with unresolved issues in my past, and I have always wanted to see a therapist, but my anxiety has always deterred me from doing so. Teladoc makes it so easy to get the help I need. I see a therapist once a week from the comfort of my own home and at a time that works for me. I am so thankful I have Teladoc!
Talking about mental health isn't easy, but it's worth it. A conversation can be a great next step to living a healthier life.

The tips in this guide are provided to help you or a loved one seek help.* There are many other resources available to support specific situations.

For more information on mental health, visit these organizations:

Teladoc: Teladoc.com/therapy
BetterHelp: BetterHelp.com
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions
Mental Health America: mhanational.org/MentalHealthInfo
MentalHealth.gov: mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health
American Psychiatric Association: https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness

Dr. Gustavo Kinrys is vice president and medical director of Mental Health Services at Teladoc Health.
Prior to joining Teladoc Health, Dr. Kinrys served as associate medical director at the Clinical Trials Network and Institute, the Bipolar Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), and faculty member at Harvard Medical School for 18 years. An accomplished author, he has published over 100 scientific articles and reviews, and has contributed to and written several books, including Anxiety Disorders manual and Natural Relief for Anxiety and Stress. He earned his medical degree from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and completed his psychiatry residency at the Mayo Clinic. Dr. Kinrys also completed a chief residency and received fellowship training in psychopharmacology at MGH. He also holds an MBA from the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts. Furthermore, Dr. Kinrys has been a recipient of numerous career awards, and lectures in national and international forums.

* Not all tips may be appropriate or applicable in all situations. If you have any questions or concerns, contact a mental health professional. And, as always, call 911 or go to your local emergency room in the event of emergencies.

** These resources are provided for information purposes only and do not constitute endorsement by Teladoc Health.


This conversation guidebook is produced by Teladoc Health, the leader in virtual care, providing millions with the treatment they need. Teladoc Health is committed to encouraging open dialogue and reducing stigma around mental health.

Learn more at Teladoc.com/therapy

394025855_05062020