

Lifeline's Care Guide



Connect

Create a safe emotional space

Ask

Help them feel heard and understood

Remind

Focus on strengths, supports
and coping strategies

Empower

Create some next steps together



Connect



Create a safe emotional space

Ensure the other person has your full attention. Maybe even chat to them in the car or while walking together—sometimes the lack of eye contact can make creating that initial connection a little easier.

When starting the conversation, be specific about the things you've noticed or recent events in their life.

The other person might not feel like sharing anything right now, but it's still worth trying.

“How’s your headspace at the moment?”

“I just wanted to check in and see how you’re going. How’ve you been feeling lately?”

“You’ve had a lot going on recently with the move and your dad’s diagnosis. I just wanted to see how you’re doing?”

Ask



Help them feel heard and understood

Encourage the person to tell more of their story, and, more specifically, how they feel about what's happening.

You might gently explore what might be at the core of the person's issues, without assuming to know the answer.

Acknowledge complexity. When someone is struggling, it's not because they've failed but because their current problems are overwhelming their capacity to cope.

"How did that make you feel?"

"It sounds like you've been through a lot of challenges recently. You're feeling sad about the time you've lost."

"Finding another place to live isn't easy in these times, especially when you also have the proximity to work and kids' school to consider."

Remind



Focus on strengths, supports and coping strategies

Help them see their own resilience and resources, without trying to solve everything.

Explore with them their current support networks. If they're struggling to identify any, you could remind them of some or help them think of some new options.

If you sense the other person is being overly critical of themselves, you can remind them that we're all human and can only do so much.

“Remember when you went and spoke to your manager about it directly? That took a lot of courage.”

“It's so tough not having family nearby. It sounds like your sister really wants to be there for you.”

“I know you feel bad about that mistake, but if someone you knew did the same thing, what would you say?”

Empower



Create some next steps together

Encourage the person to focus on what immediate next steps they have available to them.

This isn't about dismissing or downplaying the situation, but rather helping them to see a way forward.

Ensure that the appropriate people are aware of the situation. Don't shoulder this responsibility alone. Trust that the person knows best for their own life and thank them for being honest with you.

“Is there anything you’ve tried in the past, when you’ve been going through a hard time, that’s made you feel better?”

“Would you consider speaking to your doctor about this? I’ve got the car this week, I could give you a ride?”

“I appreciate you sharing this with me. I know these things aren’t always easy to talk about.”

Conversation tips for in the moment





Active Listening

When someone is talking to you about what is troubling them, make sure that you show them that they have your full attention by saying things like “**mmm**”, “**I see**” and **nodding your head**.

Let the person speak as long as they need to. The key is to stay silent—even in long pauses—and give the person the space to speak.



Reflecting Feelings

Let the other person know that how they're feeling is perfectly understandable given their current situation. All feelings are acceptable, and you can help a person feel validated in how they feel by reflecting their feelings back to them.

**“That sounds so overwhelming.
I completely understand why you'd feel
anxious and under pressure right now.”**



Closed Questions

A closed question is one that only requires a one-word answer. You can use them to help clarify and better understand how someone is feeling, and introduce new ideas to chat through.

“When did you first start feeling this way?”

“Have you been able to take any time off work?”

“Have you shared how you’re feeling with anyone else?”



Open Questions

Open questions invite the other person to talk more freely and openly. You can use them to encourage the other person to talk more about a situation or their feelings.

“How did that make you feel?”

“Why do you think your friend reacted in that way?”

“In what ways is it affecting your daily life?”



Reiterating Support

The person you are talking to and the experiences that they have just shared will all mean vastly different outcomes and next steps, but the crucial factor is reiterating that you will be there for them without judgement.

“You’re really important to me and I never want you to feel alone in this.”

“I’m so sorry you’re going through such a hard time right now. I’m here for you and we can get through this together.”

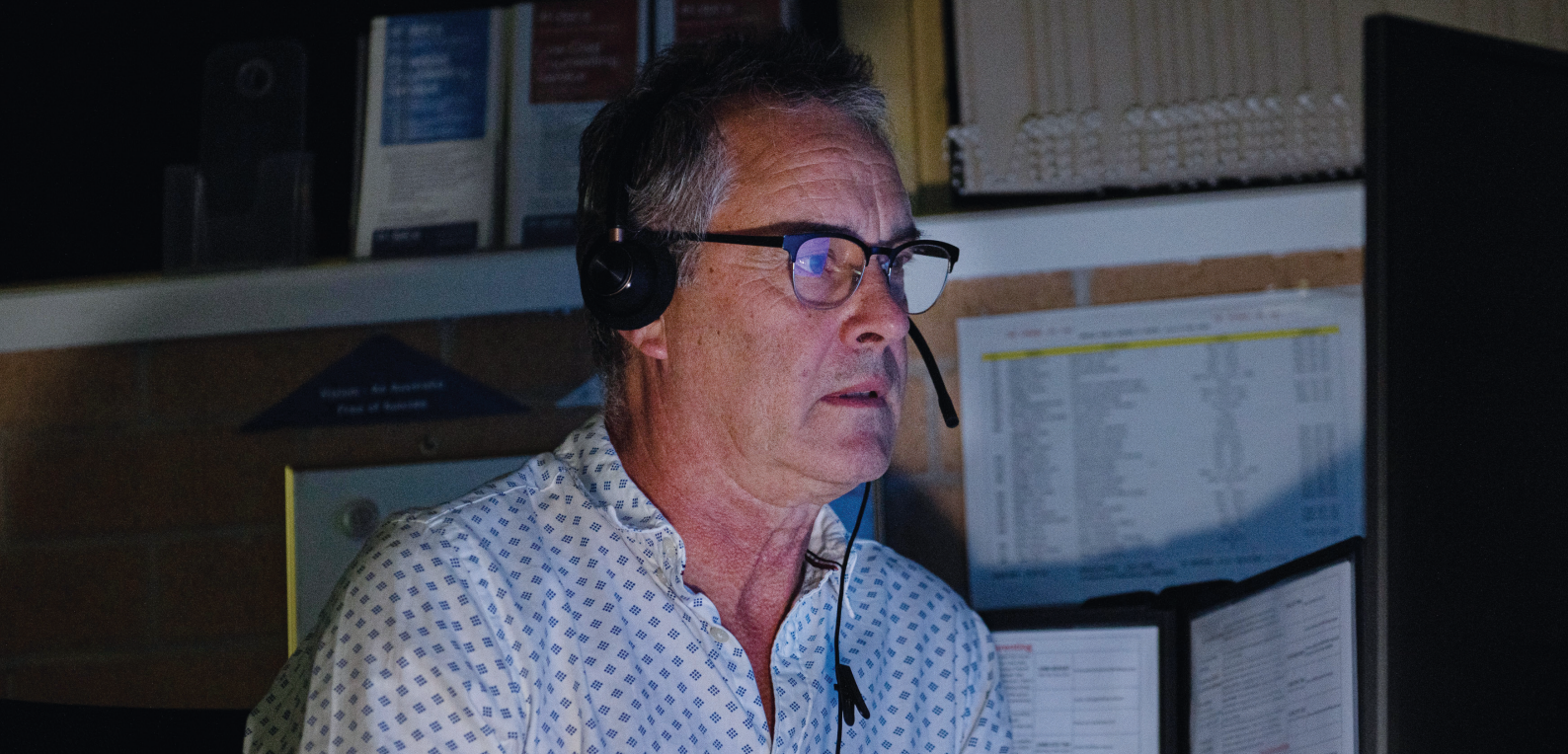


Checking In

Taking the time to check in with the other person after your initial conversation lets the other person know that you're thinking of them and are invested in their wellbeing.

“I’ve been thinking about you lately and wanted to see how you’ve been since we last spoke?”

“Just wanted to check in and see how things are going for you?”



We're here for you

Contacts to Lifeline remain high in the aftermath of the pandemic, and demand for crisis support is showing no sign of slowing down. It's as important as ever that crisis support remains accessible to all Australians.

If you or someone you know needs crisis support, call Lifeline on **13 11 14**, text **0477 13 11 14**, or visit lifeline.org.au/gethelp. Our crisis support services are free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If life is in danger, phone **000**.

It's through connection that we find hope. No one should face their darkest moments alone.

We encourage you to share this Care Guide with your friends, family and colleagues.

