

# Thrive 365

## Dragonfly: Impact Education



### Did you know?

With one in four of us in any given year being diagnosed with a mental health condition, it stands to reason that we will be working alongside people who are struggling.

Although everyone wants to be supportive, sometimes the fear of not knowing what to say - or worse - the fear of saying the wrong thing, holds people back from reaching out or from being there if someone reaches out to them.

So, what are the best things to do when we're faced with an important but potentially awkward conversation about mental health or wellbeing?

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### Starting

If you have first aiders for mental health, making sure that there are regular times for availability can help people who want to begin a conversation to approach someone without worrying that they're interrupting something else.

If you want to begin the conversation, you might choose to begin by opening up about something you've found difficult. If you've noticed changes in their behaviour, you could say what these are and ask open questions such as 'how are you feeling?'. Open questions work better than closed questions such as 'Are you OK?' because they require more than a yes/no answer.

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### Active listening

It can seem daunting to talk to someone who is struggling with their mental health; we can be preoccupied with what we're going to say in response and often our instinct is to want to fix things for them. However, the best thing is to just listen. By not worrying about what we're going to say next, we can give our undivided attention, allowing the other person to feel truly heard. Acknowledge and empathise with their feelings - 'it must be really difficult to feel that way' is a statement of validation.

It can be difficult to open up, so allow silences and give them time. Also reassure them that they've done the right thing by talking about it.

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### Closing

Ending the conversation in a clear way will also reassure the other person that they've been listened to. If the conversation isn't coming to a natural close, you might want to say 'It's been good to talk' and offer a time to talk again when they've had some time to reflect. It can also help to clarify the next steps - whether the person is going to go to their GP, talk to a family member or access help online through a website such as Mind.

If you are concerned about the person's safety, get them to make an emergency GP appointment, offer to phone 111 with them or call the Samaritans on 116 123.

**Our training:** [www.dragonflyimpact.com/link-tree](http://www.dragonflyimpact.com/link-tree)

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