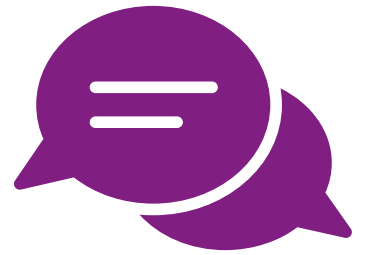


# Conversation starters



## **How to start a conversation when a disclosure has been made, or you suspect something may be wrong.**

When starting a conversation with a person impacted by violence, it's important to be empathetic and avoid judgement.

To begin with, assure the person that what you discuss will be private and kept confidential, unless there is a life-threatening situation. Be mindful of where the conversation is taking place. You might like to start by saying:

- "Do you feel comfortable to speak with me? Would you feel more comfortable talking to someone else?"
- "Thank you for sharing this information with me."

Use examples and open-ended questions when discussing the signs of violence that you have noticed. For example:

- "Twice in the past week, I've noticed..."
- "What is happening for you at the moment?"
- "I feel like you seem distracted."

When responding to a personal disclosure:

- Acknowledge how difficult it is to share this information. If you can't separate your emotional reaction to the disclosure, refer the person on in a supportive way.
- Be sensitive and mindful of your reaction and listen carefully
- Pause and allow for silence during the exchange
- Use empathy and reinforce that support is available:
  - "This must be difficult for you and your family"
  - "Are you accessing any supports or counselling programs?"

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Empower the individual to make decisions about their support pathway.

- "Would you be open to..."
- "What is the best way to give you support?"
- "Do you have someone you can talk to?"
- "What needs to happen next?"

If appropriate, you could say:

- "I'd like to give you some information about how we can support you. Is this ok?"
- "What would be the best way to follow up with you?"
- "Are you and your family safe?"
- If yes: "What can we do to support you? 'Did you know you have access to leave or flexible hours to attend appointments?"
- If no: "What needs to happen to ensure that everyone is safe?"

If the person is experiencing or using violence and wants support, offer to refer them to the organisation's employee assistance program or another service they feel safe and comfortable with.

If someone doesn't want to discuss their situation, assure them you'll be available when they are ready to talk.

See our 'Refer' guide for more information.



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