

Say This, Not That

Helpful Communication Tips for Supporting Someone Experiencing Emotional or Mental Health Concerns

This guide provides examples of supportive language that can help people feel heard, validated, and supported when expressing emotional concerns.

Supportive Language Examples

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
At least it's not worse	That sounds really hard
You just need a break	What support would feel helpful right now?
Why are you acting like this?	How can I support you right now?
Snap out of it	I'm here to listen
You don't look depressed	Mental health struggles don't always look the same
Just calm down	I can see this feels overwhelming for you right now
Everyone goes through things	What you're feeling matters
You're overthinking it	Tell me more about what's been on your mind
Just stay positive	I know this may be difficult right now

When Someone Is Overwhelmed or Stressed

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
You need to relax	Have you had a chance to rest lately?
Stop worrying so much	What's been weighing on you the most?
You're doing too much	It sounds like you've been carrying a lot
You're making this harder than it needs to be	This situation seems really difficult for you

When Someone Is Anxious

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
There's nothing to be anxious about	Anxiety can feel really real in the moment
You're fine	I'm here with you
You're overreacting	I can tell this is affecting you deeply
Calm down	Take your time. There's no rush.

When Someone Seems Sad, Depressed or Hopeless

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
Things could be worse	I'm sorry things feel heavy right now
Just think positive	You don't have to pretend everything is okay
You'll get over it	You don't have to go through this alone
You have so much to be happy (blessed) about	I know emotions are not always that simple
You'll snap out of it	I'm glad you shared this with me
You're too blessed to be depressed	Mental health struggles can affect anyone

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When Someone Opens Up or Vents

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
What do you want me to do about it?	Do you want support, advice or someone to listen?
You're being dramatic	Your feelings deserve space
You always have problems or It's always something with you	It sounds like things have been difficult lately (these last few days...weeks... months...)
You think too much	Seems like you've been carrying a lot mentally
You're being dramatic	How have you been managing it all?
That sounds crazy or You are crazy	That must have been a lot to experience

When Someone is Grieving

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...
Everything happens for a reason	I'm sorry you're going through this
Be strong	You don't have to carry this alone
At least they lived a long life	I know this loss may be painful
I know exactly how you feel	I may not fully understand, but I'm here for you
You should be over this by now	Grief looks different for everyone

Supportive Check-In Questions

- How have you really been doing lately?
- What has been the hardest part for you?
- How can I best support you right now?
- Would you like advice or just someone to listen?
- What do you need most today?

Helpful Responses When You Don't Know What to Say

- I may not have the right words, but I care
- Thank you for trusting me with this
- I'm here to listen
- That sounds really difficult

Helpful Communication Reminders

- Listen without rushing to fix the situation
- Validate feelings even if you do not fully understand
- Show empathy – [click here to watch this video on empathy](#)
- Avoid minimizing or comparing experiences
- Ask open-ended questions
- Recognize when professional support may be helpful