

Tip Sheet for Being a Trainer with Lived Experience

by Brian Johnson



1. Practice Self Care

Be aware of your own feelings before creating a conversation with someone who may be struggling. Be sure you are in a good space to talk about sensitive topics.

2. Context is important

Think about how the client may receive your questions. It's easier for youth to open up to someone who relates to them. Be aware of your tone and timing when you ask questions. Sometimes the timing isn't right for them to talk and that's okay.

3. Be aware of potential distress

- Do you notice a change in appearance?
- Are you aware of any personal situations that may be going on in their life that may be stressful?
- Take notice of things that indicate someone is having more than just a bad day. Ex: Feeling helpless/hopeless, feeling like a burden, or passive negative comments.

4. Think about your questions

Knowing how to start the conversation can sometimes be difficult.

- Share your own experiences so they don't feel alone.
- Ask open ended questions like "How is your week going?"
- Mention specifics if you know of any like, "How did that appointment go?"

5. Really Listen

- Put in effort to be a great listener.
- Give your full attention and don't interrupt.
- Keep a calm expression even if you are surprised at what was said.
- Empathize with nonverbal cues. Ex: Nodding

6. Follow Up

Continue the conversation even after the initial discussion. Make sure to follow up a few days after you've both had time to process the conversation.