

# SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

## STARTING THE CONVERSATION

When a family member is drinking too much, using drugs, or struggling with a mental disorder, your support can be key to getting them the treatment they need. Starting the conversation is the first step to getting help.

### How You Can Help

- 1 IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND PLACE.** Consider a private setting with limited distractions, such as at home or on a walk.
- 2 EXPRESS CONCERNS AND BE DIRECT.** Ask how they are feeling and describe the reasons for your concern.
- 3 ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS AND LISTEN.** Listen openly, actively, and without judgement.
- 4 OFFER TO HELP.** Provide reassurance that mental and/or substance use disorders are treatable. Help them locate and connect to treatment services.
- 5 BE PATIENT.** Recognize that helping your loved one doesn't happen overnight. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

### What to Say

"I've been worried about you. Can we talk? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?"

"I see you're going through something. How can I best support you?"

"I care about you and am here to listen. Do you want to talk about what's been going on?"

"I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How can I help?"

For more resources, visit  
[www.SAMHSA.gov/families](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/families).

If you or someone you know needs help,  
call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for free and  
confidential information and treatment referral.