

Tips for talking about mental health

This resource was created in collaboration with the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health Media Guide to help you feel empowered and informed on how to hold effective and responsible conversations about mental health.

How to Talk About Mental Health: A Quick List

- ✓ Make it clear to your fans which conversations about mental health are evidence-based compared to those based in your personal experience.
- ✓ Develop relationships with advisors and/or nonprofit organizations that can check your messaging to ensure it is accurate, safe, and responsible while also providing support and resources to your fans who may be struggling.
- ✓ Find opportunities to diversify the scope of mental health stories you share: from coping to thriving to struggling. This will help your audience understand how varied each individual's mental health experience can be.

Evidence-based vs. personal experience

- **Real Talk.** Even if you aren't presenting yourself as an expert, fans that feel connected to you or look up to you may take your perspective and tips as facts instead of seeking out information and strategies that may better apply to their unique situation.
- **Tips.** When talking about personal experiences to help prevent confusion between evidence-based information and personal experiences:
 - **"I" statements** - tell your stories in the first person to convey that these are your personal experiences.
 - **Say "In my experience" or "This works for me personally"** when conveying tips/strategies that have worked for you to help your audience understand that it is not an evidence-based experience.
 - Specifically emphasize that, just like our physical health, we all deal with unique mental health challenges and should find solutions and support that work for each of us as individuals.

Why and how to best integrate subject matter experts

- **Value of working with experts and nonprofit organizations:**
 - Ensures your messaging is safe, accurate, and effective.
 - Provides resources you can direct your audience to for those that may need further support.
 - Helps you develop protocols for responding to followers who express distress, a need for help, or suicidal thoughts.
- **Effective methods of integrating experts and/or mental health partners:**
 - Create a custom landing page on the partner organization's site with a tone and selection of resources that best suits your community.
 - Include experts and/or representatives from organizations in your content.
 - Host live events where audiences can ask questions to mental health professionals.
 - Need help finding an expert to partner with? Check out this [directory](#) to get started.

Keep in mind: have resources at the ready

As tempting as it might seem to offer personalized advice or support, this can lead to more harm than good because followers may put more energy and weight on connecting with you than creating their own support network in real life. Instead, consider including this text: "If you or someone you know is struggling, you are not alone. Call the NAMI Helpline at 800-950-6264 Mon-Fri or email info@nami.org or visit NAMI.org and access CHAT. In a crisis? Text "NAMI" to 741741."

For more information on Mental Health Conditions and resources [see here](#).

Inclusive language guide

Principle	Definition	Productive Phrases	Counter Productive Phrases
PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE	Person First means using language to recognize a person's experience with mental health as only part of them as a person, and not the whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person living with schizophrenia • My brother living with OCD • She is a person recovering from addiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A schizophrenic • My OCD brother • She is an addict
NORMALIZING LANGUAGE	Normalizing what one is going through and not minimizing or judging their experience with mental health can help people open up more regularly and feel less alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's understandable to be feeling down with everything going on. • What you're going through is challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Depression is not a bad illness to have" • "Some people have it way worse" • "Why can't you just chill out?"
COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE	Words and phrases that are second-nature to us (slang or colloquial expressions) may be rooted in problematic assumptions, which can hurt those around us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm having trouble focusing • The weather is fluctuating a lot today • I like things done in a particular way • That's unreal/wild 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I have such ADD right now" • "This weather is bipolar" • "I'm so OCD about this kind of stuff" • "That's crazy/insane"
LANGUAGE AROUND SUICIDE	As one of the most taboo topics, it's helpful to have the right language when talking about suicide. Research shows that talking about and explicitly asking about suicide can greatly reduce the risk of someone dying by suicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Died by suicide • Ended their own life • Attempted suicide • Sometimes when people feel this way, they think about ending their life. Are you having these thoughts? • "That was so hard" (avoid mentioning suicide casually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed suicide • Successful suicide • Unsuccessful suicide • You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you? • "OMG I wanted to kill myself, that was so hard"

Tips for maximizing impact of your mental health content from [Dr Ali Mattu](#):

- ✓ **Combine mental health with proven formats.** Incorporate the video elements that your audience loves and expects from you and use that in your mental health content.
- ✓ **Stick to your story.** Stick to *your* experience. Don't speculate on someone else's.
- ✓ **Tell stories about your scars, not your wounds.** Share struggles that you have told other people about without feeling overwhelmed. If you're not at that point yet, take some time until you are.