

Tara's Tips for Talking to Teens (*about mental health stuff*)

Normalize it by talking about it, because they already are! Mental health might be private, but it's not secret or shameful. Treat it like any other health issue, and discuss your family mental health history openly.

Main lesson - by talk, I mostly mean LISTEN.

- ◆ Try to just be QUIET
- ◆ Be curious, don't assume you know what they are going through
- ◆ Don't rush to reassure, or tell them what they are feeling is silly or explain how they are wrong, EVEN if it's out of love and the need to make them (and you) feel better

When you DO talk - Helpful phrases to use:

- ◆ I wonder...◆ Help me understand...
- ◆ That sounds hard/sad/difficult/scary. Tell me more...
- ◆ How would you like it to turn out....
- ◆ What can we do to get there?
- ◆ "How can I best support you right now?" instead of "Everything will be fine, you're ok, it's not as bad as you think"....
- ◆ It's scary to hear you talk this way, I'm going to need more information

You don't have to fix it. ***Sometimes being heard and loved and understood really is enough.***

If kids feel validated, they will be better able to receive feedback and change their own behaviors. Validation does NOT mean that you agree or that you like what the person is doing, feeling or saying. Validation means letting someone know you: are listening; understand how they feel; are taking them seriously; are understanding their behavior within the context of their life circumstances; accept them; and that you have found the "kernel of truth" in their communication.

