



# It's OK to not be OK

## **Mental illnesses are something we don't talk about enough.**

It's okay to not be okay though. When we talk about mental illnesses, we start healing together. Here are some tips to stop the silence and start talking about mental health in our community.

### **Show you care**

Be a safe space for the people you know to talk about their mental illnesses and health concerns. Ask questions and avoid awkward silences. Encourage people to open up.

### **Be kind**

Try to stay open-minded, positive, and caring. Show the person opening up to you that you care about what they're trying to say, and that their health matters.

### **Listen**

Try to listen more instead of offering solutions or being dismissive. Avoid phrases like, "Nothing is wrong with you." Or, "You're just sad right now, you'll get through it."

### **Keep in contact**

Offer to be available by phone, text, email or meeting up in person. Just be there for the person opening up to you, and let them know you've got them.

### **Don't ignore it**

If someone seems like they're struggling but they aren't saying anything, don't be afraid to ask. Sometimes stopping the silence means starting those hard conversations.

### **Offer support**

Everyone is different, some people want help and some don't. Either way, just let the people around you know you're there for them and will support them.

Join us in the Movement and learn more at:

[www.IowaHealthiestState.com/BackTheBlack](http://www.IowaHealthiestState.com/BackTheBlack)



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## Learn what to say to **Make it OK**

### **Talking about mental health is hard.**

That's why we're on a mission to make it ok to talk about mental health illnesses in the Black Iowan community. Here are some helpful phrases you can use or not use when you're ready to talk about it!

#### **HELPFUL:**

- "I love you."
- "Thanks for trusting me."
- "What can I do for you in this moment?"
- "How can I help?"
- "I apologize this is happening to you"
- "I'm here for you when you need me."
- "How are you feeling today?"
- "Are you looking for my perspective or would you rather I listen?"

#### **NOT HELPFUL:**

- "It could be worse ..."
- "Just deal with it."
- "Snap out of it."
- "Everyone feels that way sometimes."
- "We've all been there."
- "You've got to pull yourself together."
- "Try thinking happier thoughts."
- "You may have brought this on yourself."
- "All you need is ..."

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**Make It OK**



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## **Mental Illnesses** *are OK*

### ***Do you know if you have a mental illness?***

More than 7 million Black people in the U.S. are living with a mental health condition. So although mental health illnesses are very common, stigma keeps us from talking about and recognizing it.

### ***Real talk: you might be ignoring the signs***

Do you sleep too much? Or zone out in front of the TV a lot? Do you suppress your emotions? Feel down and can't seem to snap out of it? Or maybe you lost interest in things you once enjoyed? Maybe you struggle with relationships and controlling your moods? There are so many different symptoms of different mental illnesses. That's why speaking with a professional is important to get the right kind of help.

### ***It's not a spiritual flaw or weakness***

Health conditions are treatable: they're not flaws or anything wrong with you as a person. Mental illnesses are biological and medical conditions that can be treated, just like cancer or diabetes.

### ***You matter: life can get better***

Today, treatments for mental illnesses are very effective. Once people seek treatment, more than 70% of symptoms are reduced and people feel better.

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**Make It** 



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**44% of  
Black LGBTQ youth  
seriously  
considered suicide  
in the past 12  
months,**

*including 59% of  
Black transgender and  
nonbinary youth*



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