

Sample Script

(for non-life-threatening behavior)

Instead of asking How Can I Help? (they won't know anyway), try offering concrete ways of supporting such as:

- Let's find a safe place to talk.
- Would you like to speak with the counselor or a specific friend?

Instead of telling someone not to worry, make sure to validate the concern. Note: This is especially important to remember when you don't perceive the student's concern as "real," as in the case of OCD. It is always real to the person suffering.

- I can see how hard this is on you. You're not alone. Let's get you support.
- Thank you for trusting me with this. Let's make a plan.

But I'm Worried About Messing Up!

Teens don't need perfection. They need authenticity. Be honest about your own lack of authority, but model willingness to engage and learn.

Sample Script

(for non-life-threatening behavior)

When a student unexpectedly shares a vulnerable experience, **don't react out of panic.**

Take a breath. Try one of these:

- Thank you for sharing that with me. You are not alone. This is a valid and normal reaction.
- Would you like me to help you find resources?
- That sounds incredibly tough. You will get through this, but you don't have to go through it alone, okay? Would you like me (or someone else) to help you make a plan?
- Would you like to talk to anyone in particular?

If time is short or the person doesn't want to talk anymore, tell them you will follow up later, and then make sure you do.

Please note: Unless the situation requires mandated reporting, make sure you ASK if the person wants a counselor or parent called. Those authority figures may be part of the problem.

Educators are not mental health professionals. There are limits to what we can do. As we create these safer mental health spaces, we must tend to our own mental health needs. Model respect for mental health.