



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips for how we can support people in pain



Validate. Here are some statements that you can use and make your own:

- “I hear you.”
- “That sounds really hard.”
- “I can’t even imagine how difficult this is.”
- “Damn. That is so tough.”
- “That sounds like a lot.”
- “I’m here for you.”
- “I’m not going to leave you.”
- “I’ll help you through this.”
- “I know you feel alone right now, but just know you have me.”



Get curious. Be careful not to say “I understand” right away. You may not actually understand and the person may feel like you didn’t take the time to learn about their situation or adequately provide them with a space to share. Here are some variations you can use and make your own:


- “Can you tell me more about that?”
- “What are your concerns right now?”
- “Can you help me understand what has been going on?”
- “I really want to understand this more so I can help you.”
- “Let’s talk about it.”





Refrain from offering advice until you’ve been explicitly told that the person wants. Humans want to be understood and seen. It’s one of our deepest desires, and the motivation behind much of our behavior. Language has the power to make people feel a sense of belonging. This is why our words matter. A simple shift in what you say to someone struggling can make a huge difference.





Here are 10 of the most unhelpful things you can say to someone when they're in pain, and exactly why they're so unhelpful.


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“Get over it.” Yes, you want them to get over it. That would be nice, wouldn't it? They want to get over it, too. And if they knew how, they would do it. This statement rushes the process, shuts down the conversation, and invalidates their feelings
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“Move on.” This is another suggestion to rush the process. It invalidates what the person is feeling, makes it clear that you do not want to hear more about it, and tells them not to feel it, all at the same time. It's also not very specific: How does one “move on” on command? What exactly does that entail?
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“It's not that big of a deal.” This is maybe not the best thing to say to a person who is overwhelmed by something that really does seem like a big deal to them at this moment. What we consider to be a big deal is all about perspective; there is no universal scale.
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“But did you try (insert suggestion)?” I have learned that what people hate most when they're in pain is a suggestion—especially if it's yoga or turmeric. Avoid those two suggestions unless explicitly asked about yoga and/or turmeric.
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“At least it's not (insert situation that you think is worse).” This is so gloriously awful: You are literally telling the person that they don't have a right to be upset because something else bad happened in the world. Rough—10 out of 10 would not recommend.
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“I wouldn't have done that.” This is just a way to assert superiority when someone is down.
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“Everything happens for a reason.” This is incredibly awful to say when something happens that cannot be explained, like an unexpected death. Some things just happen and they are awful. Finding the reason isn't always possible.
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“You brought this on yourself.” Honestly, nothing is that simple. Instead of being curious, we're using blame as a way to shame the person into taking responsibility.
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“You need to try harder.” When someone is experiencing a failure or a loss, this isn't the best way to motivate them. It is possible that someone is trying their hardest and things still don't work out. If they do in fact need to try harder, that will become apparent without you informing them.
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“Calm down.” Let's just set the record straight right now: Never in the history of the world has this statement ever helped someone calm down

Reference - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-together/202001/10-the-worst-things-you-can-say-someone-in-pain>

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au