

How to find out what someone wants

People experience tough times differently. Some people want to talk. Others prefer a distraction. Some appreciate practical help. Others simply want someone to listen.

The problem is that when we're not sure what's helpful, we often make assumptions. Or worse, we hold back because we're worried about getting it wrong. A few simple conversations can make all the difference.

By asking how someone would like to be supported, you're giving yourself the confidence to lean in instead of holding back. Their needs might change over time, or even from day to day. That's okay. Keep checking in so you always know how to best support them.



Instead of assuming



How much they'd like shared



Whether they'd like to talk about what's happening



What kind of support feels most helpful



How often they'd like you to check in



What kind of visits they'd like



How they'd like help to be offered



How they'd like specific tasks to work



Whether they'd like advice



Ask



"Are you happy for me to tell people what's going on, or would you rather keep things private?"



"Would you like to talk about it, or would you prefer to talk about something else?"



"What would feel most helpful today? Someone to listen, a distraction, or a bit of encouragement?"



"Would you like me to check in regularly, or would you rather reach out when you're up to it?"



"Would you prefer I check before coming over, or are you happy for me to drop by?"



"Would you rather I ask first, or is it helpful if I just get on with things when I can?"



"Would it help if I dropped off a meal anytime, or would you rather I check first?"



"Would it help to talk through some ideas, or would you rather I kept my advice to myself?"

Remember You don't have to ask every question all at once. Start with the conversations that matter most, then keep checking in as things change. The more you understand what feels helpful, the more confidently you can show up.