'Just' Anxiety?

Talking to someone experiencing anxiety

Learn more about anxiety: mentalhealth-uk.org/aboutanxiety

What not to say:
“Other people have it worse."

What they hear:
“You're fine, you don't have it that bad.”

What to say instead:
“I'm here with you. What do you need right now?”

Fact: Everyone's worries are valid regardless of how 'little' or 'big' they seem to someone else. Anxiety symptoms can severely impact someone's life regardless of the cause of worry and it should be taken seriously.

What not to say:
“It's my/their fault you're like this."

What they hear:
“Let's blame your anxiety on something else.”

What to say instead:
“Let's work through this together.”

Fact: Attributing blame will not help the person to deal with their symptoms. Focus on practical ways to help them in the here and now.

What not to say:
“Worrying won't solve anything."

What they hear:
“Just stop it - you're able to stop.”

What to say instead:
“Let's focus on the here and now and what you can control.”

Fact: When you're experiencing chronic anxiety it's difficult to just 'stop worrying'. Remind the person about what they are in control of and to focus on the present moment.

What not to say:
“Everyone feels 'nervous' sometimes."

What they hear:
“I don't believe anxiety disorders exist.”

What to say instead:
“I understand this triggers you. How can I support you?”

Fact: Anxiety disorders are more than just 'feeling nervous' and present a range of mental and physical symptoms. You could be minimising and normalising someone's symptoms saying this.

What not to say:
“Just calm down”

What they hear:
“You're overreacting and can stop this if you wanted to.”

What to say instead:
“I can see you're anxious. What can I do to help?”

Fact: A panic attack can cause physical symptoms which can be difficult to control or 'snap out of'. Instead it's helpful to offer practical support to help them with their symptoms.