After conversations

Make time to check-in and follow-up

As difficult conversations can involve the sharing of hard-to-process information, following up on these talks at a later time can give each side time to digest what has been said, and allow you to see if that information has been taken on board.

Checking-in emotionally with your parent or carer is also important. This is true for the days and even weeks following your conversation - everyone processes information in different ways and in their own unique timelines.

Debrief with a friend or another family member

Debriefing with a loved one or someone you trust, or professional, can help to offload and deal with the emotions, thoughts and memories that can be brought to the surface with these conversations. They can also be a way to reflect on the talk as a whole, and discuss what went well and what didn't with someone who knows you well. They can also be another important part of your support network for check-ins and follow-ups so that you can feel supported during this time, and so that they might understand and expect changes in your mood following these talks.

Set a time to self-reflect and practice self-care:

Having deep and difficult conversations may leave you feeling drained, both physically and emotionally. It is important to recognise that this is normal and it is okay if you feel that way. Making time to reflect on how the conversation went can help you identify what was and wasn't helpful to say or do for your future talks. In saying that, do try to stay away from being overly critical of yourself and/or your parents/carers. Indeed, this might be the first time either party has heard about certain concepts, you and/or your parents/carers might not have responded the way the other had expected. Acknowledge your efforts and treat any mishaps as a learning curve. Regardless of how the conversation went, taking the necessary time to look after yourself is crucial - in fact, this should be a common practice like hand-washing! Think about any activities which you are currently doing that give you joy (e.g. running, reading, journaling, playing video games, netflixing, doing skincare routines etc…), and make time for them everyday. However, there is a fine line between self-caring and procrastinating - if you start to notice that you are chronically doing something to avoid another, it may be a sign of procrastination! Setting and consistently taking that me-time each day can greatly benefit your mood, productivity as well as reducing burn-out, all of which helps to improve your overall physical and mental wellbeing.
Remember: "Resting is never a wasted time."

A reminder that your experiences and feelings matter

Regardless of whether our conversations about mental health with parents go north or south, it's important to remind ourselves of this: our experiences of mental health challenges and the emotions that arise during the conversation are valid. Parents or carers finding it difficult to comprehend our experiences of mental ill-health does not make it any less real. Remember: our experiences are valid as they are and this is not defined by whether the experience is approved or supported by our parents/carers. Nothing we or our parents do or say will erase the validity of these experiences.

We are all human and part of being human is experiencing feelings and emotions. It is okay to experience the feelings that arise after these conversations, regardless of whether it's positive or negative. It's okay to 'feel our feelings' rather than try to suppress it. It's okay to be vulnerable and lower our walls. It's okay to cry and express our emotions. Contrary to popular belief, being vulnerable doesn't make you weak, it shows that you are brave and super cool.

Our emotions can be strong and overwhelming after difficult conversations. These feelings may lead us down a path of unhelpful thinking. One way to manage our emotional responses, is to pay attention to your breathing, because it helps our mind and body relax. You can find more ways to manage difficult feelings here. When we are relaxed, we have more mental space to process our thoughts and reflect. Then, it can be helpful to pay attention to the post-conversation thoughts that are running through our minds.
Are these thoughts true? Are these thoughts realistic? Are these thoughts helpful?
Becoming aware of hurtful thoughts is an important step towards replacing them with more meaningful and helpful thoughts.

Self-talk examples

- This conversation with my parents/carer may have gone badly but that does not mean my experiences of mental ill-health or poor mental well-being is less real or invalid.

- My lived experiences are valid, regardless of what others say or how they respond to me sharing/being vulnerable.

- It's okay for me to be experiencing these feelings. I am human and feelings are part of being human.

- It's okay for me to express my feelings. This does not make me weak or less than human.