



► Professionals ◀

ACTIVITY: ReachOut.com InfoBus Discussions

Referring to an online Q&A with a professional

The ReachOut.com 'InfoBus' sessions are monthly discussions on the ReachOut.com forums. A mental health professional or specialist is invited as a special guest, to respond to young people's questions and facilitate a discussion about a serious mental health topic - such as coping with depression, self-harm, eating disorders etc. These discussions provide a safe, guided space for young people to talk about mental health topics that may be sensitive or potentially triggering, and to get professional advice with a level of anonymity.

In this activity, you refer a young person to an InfoBus session as a safe and anonymous space that they can use to explore sensitive mental health related issues they may be experiencing.

Guidelines

- Access the InfoBus discussions by
 1. going to forums.au.reachout.com
 2. clicking the [ReachOut.com presents... sub-forum](#) under 'Tough Times'
- Familiarise yourself with the style of discussions and the kinds of topics explored by browsing through previous discussions.
- Refer to au.professionals.reachout.com/forum-discussions for a list of upcoming discussion topics.
- Identify topics that might be relevant or useful for the young person you are working with, and make note of them for the next time you see that young person.



“ It gives me the opportunity to talk to other young people who are/have gone through hard times. RO gives me the support and encouragement I need to get through each day. I don't know where I'd be without the constant love and support from the mods & members. :) I like that it's a safe environment where we can talk about what we need to, the GR session, Infobus' and community challenges all assist in creating a safe and encouraging environment.

Well done :)

- ReachOut.com Forums user, 17

Content, tools and technology for professionals supporting youth mental health and wellbeing.

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In practice

Set the context

- ▶ When discussing a mental health issue that a young person may be experiencing, suggest that it can be helpful to see what other young people think or to ask questions of a specialist.
- ▶ Suggest a past or upcoming InfoBus session as an anonymous space that they can use to understand more about the issue and their experience, by following other people's conversation with a specialist, or by asking questions or responding to reflection questions.

“ Lots of people find talking about this stuff difficult. There's an online forum where people talk about their experiences of [issue] and get advice from a specialist. Would you find it helpful to see what other people who have been through similar situations have to say? ”

Explore and explain

- ▶ Show them the forums on your computer or mobile device. When introducing the forums for the first time, get the young person to 'drive' the computer and navigate to the forums from the ReachOut.com homepage so they know how to find the right place.
au.reachout.com ▶ [Forums](#) ▶ [ReachOut.com presents...](#)
- ▶ Get them to navigate to and read the community guidelines, which are located in the introductory paragraph at the top of the forums.
- ▶ If you're referring to a past thread, give them time to read through it or suggest they go away and read some of the threads before your next session.
- ▶ Ask them to browse some of the previous threads, and ask if they would be interested in participating in the upcoming discussion you've identified. Let them know that many people are happy to just 'lurk' and watch the conversation, but also suggest that participating offers the greatest opportunity for self-reflection or useful advice.
- ▶ Explain to them that forum web pages do not automatically refresh with new comments, so they will need to refresh the page from time to time to see new comments while the discussion is happening.

Give them triggers and motivation

- ▶ If they are interested, get them to make note of the time and the ReachOut.com URL. If it is feasible within your practice systems, arrange a reminder email or message.
- ▶ Let them know that you'd be keen to find out in the next session whether they found it useful and whether they learnt more about the issue from the discussion.

Questions to ask in the next session

“ Did you visit that InfoBus discussion on the ReachOut.com forums? How was it? ”

“ What questions did they ask? ”

“ Did you ask any questions? What did the others have to say? ”

“ Did anyone else's experiences resonate with you? Did anything sound familiar? ”

Notes

Find out more about the ReachOut.com forums and how they are moderated in the article [Using the ReachOut.com Forums](#).

- ▶ au.professionals.reachout.com/Using-the-ReachOut-forums

It can be helpful to print off a copy of upcoming discussions and put it up on your practice noticeboard or in your service newsletter for young people that may be interested.

- ▶ au.professionals.reachout.com/forum-discussions

