

## CAN WE TALK?

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Ever had the experience of something bothering you so much you just 'had to vent'? Did just saying out loud what was on your mind make you feel better? How can something as simple as talking make such a big difference?

The answer may be that venting isn't just 'blowing hot air'. When we talk we're not only using our mouths, we're using our brains: the effort to articulate forces us to reflect, analyze and organize our experiences so that they're more comprehensible to another person—and to ourselves as well. By externalizing thoughts and feelings we get distance from them which allows a new perspective. One hypothesis from neuroscience is that language may actually connect the thinking and feeling parts of our brains.

When somebody's listening, there can be a 'meeting of the minds' which is even more helpful. So what makes a good listener? Ideally it's someone with whom we feel comfortable saying anything, one who doesn't judge or jump in too soon with advice, and one who genuinely cares about us. Having a good friend or relative to listen is great, but sometimes that's not possible. Sometimes we need to talk MORE than our listeners can listen.

One alternative to speaking is writing. Writing gives us the benefits of language but in another way. Many people find journaling regularly or when they

are stressed to be very helpful. Another option in these situations is to seek a counselor. These 'professional listeners' can help you gain all the benefits of talk plus you get their unbiased and informed perspectives. Counseling is available for free to Tulane students in the ERC (x5113) and the SHC (x5225).

So when the time comes to blow off steam, let it VENT!