

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

Helping a Friend

When someone is depressed or anxious, they may know they need help, but just don't have the energy or the will to reach out. Even a phone call is too much. And that's why community is so important. If you see someone hurting, say something to someone—other students, parents, teachers, coaches, or other members of your community. It's not just about you or me, it affects us all. Asking for help is the tough part and the first step.

Useful Websites & Phone Numbers

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

StarVista Crisis Center and Teen Chatroom

(650) 579-0350
www.onyourmind.net

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 in the US
for FREE 24/7 crisis support.
www.crisistextline.org

What Not to Do or Say

- Don't tell them to cheer up or get over it
- Don't encourage them to turn to drugs, alcohol, or other substances. Substance use may help them cope momentarily, but is likely to make the situation worse
- Don't tell your friend that they can snap out of it if they try hard enough. Mental health problems have nothing to do with being lazy or weak
- Don't define them by their diagnosis or use labels such as "crazy." Treat them with respect, just as you would anyone else
- Don't make promises you can't keep. If your friend is at risk of harming themselves or somebody else, you need to seek immediate help, even if your friend asks you not to



safespace

a youth engagement organization
dedicated to changing the way young
people think about mental health issues.

Ways to Help a Friend

Getting the proper help for a friend may take thought and effort, but it is worth it. Being a supportive and good friend includes checking in periodically to make sure that they are doing okay. If your friend tells you that they are not okay, there are steps you can take:

1. Offer a listening ear: Simply listening lets a friend know that you care. Tell them you are there to help and they are not alone.
2. Providing your friend resources can be extremely helpful. Contact these resources together. Be honest with your friend about why you are worried about them.
3. Ask if they have reached out to others for help. If your friend is in danger of hurting themselves or someone else, it is important to reach out to a trusted adult.
4. Suggest self-help strategies: eat well, sleep, and exercise but know your friend's limits during this time.
5. Do activities with your friend that will help them stay positive
6. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult (e.g. a family member, teacher, coach, or doctor)
7. If they need additional support, suggest an appointment with their doctor, therapist or school counselor. It is okay to go with them.

8. If your friend refuses help, you should reach out to a family member or other trusted adult.
9. Understanding your friend's right to privacy and the need to make sure they are safe is a balancing act. It is always better to seek help when you are concerned.

What to Say to a Friend

- "Have you talked to anyone else about this?"
- "Thank you for opening up to me. I am glad that you did, but we should get help from a trusted adult, counselor, or your doctor."
- "I know that you are not feeling well but with the right help, you will get through this and I am here to help you."
- "Finding the right help doesn't always mean going to talk to a psychologist or taking medication. Your family doctor can help you."
- "We can get confidential help online or over the phone."

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