



HOW TO HELP WHEN YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT A FRIEND'S MENTAL HEALTH

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

When a friend is going through a tough time, it can be hard to know what to do or say.

YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THEY...

- don't seem like themselves
- they're acting differently
- becoming quiet or withdrawn
- not looking after themselves
- becoming agitated or irritable
- having low energy and motivation
- worrying excessively and procrastinating
- engaging in risky behaviour

YOU COULD...

- let them know that you care
- ask them what you can do to support them
- let them know that you're there to help them
- speak to a trusted adult

People may not always want to share their upsetting thoughts or feelings, but showing them you care can give your friend the strength to reach out for help when they're ready.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T WANT MY HELP?

For many people, reaching out for support can be really challenging. You might find that some of your friends need a bit of time and space.

Continue to check in on your friend regularly if you notice they are still struggling.

Sometimes you might need to involve someone else – like a trusted adult. If you do decide to tell someone, try to let your friend know that you're planning on doing this.

DO'S & DON'TS

- be patient with your friend.
- don't judge them or get frustrated if they don't take you up on your offer of support.
- remind them that you're there if they need you and give them some time.



ASKING YOUR FRIEND IF THEY NEED HELP CAN BE HARD, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF HELP YOU CAN OFFER. CHECKING IN CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

STARTING THE CONVERSATION CAN FEEL REALLY HARD BECAUSE IT'S DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT TO SAY. SOMETIMES IT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS...



"HEY, ARE YOU DOING OK? I'VE NOTICED WE HAVEN'T BEEN HANGING OUT MUCH RECENTLY. I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW I'M HERE FOR YOU."



PLAN FOR THE CONVERSATION

- check-in with yourself: are you feeling ok and are ready to have the chat?
- do some research and get a better understanding of what might be going on for them
- choose a time that suits you both, where you won't be rushed and are free from distractions
- choose somewhere private
- prepare some open ended questions (e.g., 'What's on your mind?')

PROVIDING SUPPORT

Let your friend know you're here for them. You might say something like:

- **"It's OK to feel this way and I'm here to support you."**
- **"Thank you for telling me. I'm sorry you're going through this right now."**
- **"You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to, but just know that I'm here to listen without judgement."**

Sometimes your friend may benefit from additional support from a trusted adult or health professional. You might say something like:

- **"Have you talked to anyone else about this? It's great you've talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and support from the guidance officer or health professional."**
- **"Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone from places like Head Space, Kids Helpline and Lifeline. All of these services are anonymous and can help you figure out what's going on for you and where to go for the right support."**
- **"A GP can help you with this stuff. You can find one that bulk-bills, so you don't have to pay. I can go along with you, if you want."**
- **"I know you don't feel great right now, but with the right support, you can get through this."**

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult. It can take a toll on your own mental health, so it's important that you take care of yourself, too.

Self care can include:

- creating connections
- eating well
- staying active
- getting enough sleep
- getting outside
- practising gratitude
- mindfulness
- avoiding substances

You can check out our tips for self care on our website.



URGENT CONTACTS

IF YOU OR YOUR FRIEND NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE CALL **000**

- SPEAK TO AN ADULT URGENTLY
- CALL LIFELINE ON 13 11 14
- CALL SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE ON 1300 659 467



BE MINDFUL THAT YOUR ROLE IS TO BE A FRIEND, NOT A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL. RECOGNISE YOUR LIMITS AND SET BOUNDARIES THAT ALLOW YOU TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIEND WHILE MAINTAINING BALANCE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP.