

How Can I Help A Friend?

Ten tips for helping a friend with a mental health problem.

10. If you are worried about a friend's attitude or behavior, talk with him or her as soon as possible.
9. Meet your friend in a comfortable place where you can talk privately. Talk in a calm and considerate manner about the specific things you have seen or felt that caused you to worry about his or her health.
8. Voice your concern in a supportive and careful way. Here are a few tips:
 - Use "I" statements. For example, "I'm worried about your safety," or "It makes me afraid to hear you talk about suicide."
 - Avoid "You" statements that sound critical. For example, "You're out of control," or "You must be crazy!"
 - Avoid giving simple solutions. For example, "Everything would be okay if you just stopped..."
7. Give advice in the form of options. For instance, recommend a health professional for your friend to see or suggest support groups you think may help your friend work through the problem.
6. Your friend may deny that he or she has a problem. If your friend won't listen to you, you may need to talk to a trusted adult. A trusted adult is any adult that you trust and feel comfortable talking to like a parent, teacher, school counselor, doctor, or religious leader.
5. Remember you cannot make someone get help or change their attitudes or behaviors. You can make a significant difference by sharing your concerns, being supportive and knowing where to go for more information.
4. Be sure to take care of yourself. It is important to make sure to take care of your own health while helping a friend. Make sure to get enough sleep, to eat properly, to exercise and to take some time to relax and reflect.
3. Although you may be willing to do anything and everything to help your friend, don't try to take over their life. Offer support but be patient.

2. Mental health problems are often hard to explain, and your friend may have trouble putting how they feel into words. Be supportive and non-judgmental, and try your best to understand your friend's problem.

1. To be a good friend, never keep talk of suicide a secret, even if the friend has asked you to. Take it seriously and seek help immediately from a trusted adult or a health professional. It is better to risk losing a friendship than to risk losing a friend forever.

For more information, visit Mental Health America of Wisconsin's web site at www.mhawisconsin.org or call (414) 276-3122.

Source: www.mpoweryouth.org