



How to Help a Friend

1. Know the Warning Signs

You know more about what's going on in your friends' lives than anyone else. This puts you in the best position to know if one of your friends needs help. Below is a list of warning signs to look out for:

- Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks
- Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so
- Severe out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing
- Throwing up, using laxatives or not eating to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still that puts a person in physical danger or causes school failure
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

For more information about the symptoms of mental health conditions, check out the following websites: www.nami.org, www.teenshealth.org and www.ReachOutHere.com.

2. Share Your Concerns

If you notice any of the above warning signs or if you're concerned one of your friends is thinking about suicide, don't be afraid to talk to her or him about it.

Start the Conversation

- Before you start the conversation, have a list of resources your friend can use to get help on hand.
- Open the conversation by sharing SPECIFIC signs you've observed.
 - "I've noticed lately that you [haven't been sleeping, aren't interested in soccer anymore, which you used to love, are posting a lot of sad song lyrics online, etc.]..."

If you think your friend may be thinking about suicide, ask the direct question.

- "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- "Do you have a plan? Do you know how you would do it?"
- "When was the last time you thought about suicide?"

If your friend answers "Yes" to these questions, or if you think they might be at risk of suicide, you **NEED** to talk to an adult you trust **IMMEDIATELY** or call:

988 or the Ulster County Mobile Mental Health Team 844-277-4820 (10 am-10 pm)

Listen, express concern, reassure

Focus on being understanding, caring and nonjudgmental

- "You are not alone. I'm here for you"
- "I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help"
- "I'm concerned about you and I want you to know there is help available to get you through this"
- "You are important to me; we will get through this together"

What Not to Say

- Don't promise secrecy. Say instead: "I care about you too much to keep this kind of secret. You need help and I'm here to help you get it"
- "We all go through tough times like these. You'll be fine."
- "It's all in your head. Just snap out of it."
- Don't ask in a way that indicates you want "No" for an answer.
 - "You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"
 - "You haven't been throwing up to lose weight have you?"

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call/text **988**. For confidential, free crisis counseling, text **NAMI to 741741**

3. Get Help

If your friend is experiencing warning signs of a mental health condition, encourage them to **TALK TO A TRUSTED ADULT**. In addition, let your friend know about resources they can turn to for anonymous support and information.

Online Resources

- www.OK2TALK.org – An online forum for teens and young adults to talk about what they're experiencing by sharing their personal stories and motivational quotes and images
- Resources listed under *Know the Warning Signs* for additional information and support

Talk to Someone

- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call/text 988. For confidential, free crisis counseling, text NAMI to 741741
- Teen Line: open 10 am – 10 pm ET text "Friend" to 62640
- The Trevor Project (For LGBTQ Youth): Trevor Lifeline: 24/7: 866-488-7386

Apps

- Mindshift –helps teens and young adults cope with anxiety
- My3 – helps youth stay connected with their support network if having thoughts of suicide
- MoodKit – helps improve your mood by developing self-awareness and healthy attitudes
- Take a Break! Guided Meditations for Stress Relief – helps you cope with stress

Local Resources



24 HOUR CRISIS HOTLINE
FAMILY OF WOODSTOCK, INC.
(845) 679-2485 or (845) 338-2370

UlsterHelps.org
Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery
Resources for Positive Change

ULSTER COUNTY MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH TEAM
ACCESS: Supports for Living
(844) 277-4820 | 10 am – 10 pm

4. Be a Good Friend

One of the most important factors in recovery is the understanding and acceptance of friends. Below is a list of ways you can help a friend who is living with a mental health condition:

- Include your friend in your plans – continue inviting them, even if your invitation is turned down
- Help your friend stay positive
- Don't treat them differently
- Stand up for your friend
- Check-in regularly, listen and offer support
- Learn more about mental health (see websites listed under *Know the Warning Signs*)

5. Reduce Stigma

Stigma is the biggest reason people don't try to get help. By taking steps to reduce mental health stigma in your school and community, you can help your friend feel more comfortable speaking up when they need support. The sooner your friend gets help, the greater the chances will be of getting better. Below is a list of things you can do to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health conditions and end the silence.

- Talk about mental health with friends & family
- Share links to resources on social media
- Don't bully, stereotype or label others
- Call people out if they use stigmatizing language
- Use people first language
 - If you speak to or about a person with a mental health condition, speak to the person first, and then the mental health condition
 - Ex: Instead of "they are bipolar" say "a person living with bipolar disorder"
- Wear a lime green ribbon to raise mental health awareness and let people with a mental health condition know they are not alone.