

information...

How to Talk To a Friend in Need

People you care about can go through mental health challenges. This tip sheet was written by youth who have been through mental health challenges. This is what they wish their friends would have known to support them.

Be real with me.

- Remind me that everyone has ups and downs.
- Help me to understand that it's okay to feel fear. First, learning about mental health and talking about me can be scary.
- People are often embarrassed about having mental health struggles in the beginning, so be sensitive with me.
- Let me know that you are not going to judge me.
- When you ask me how I am doing, make it okay for me to be honest.
- Remember to really listen and reply sincerely.
- If I may be using drugs or alcohol, express how you feel about my drug or alcohol use. Know that I could be covering up how I feel.

Help me understand that I am not alone.

- Remind me that a lot of people struggle with their mental health. Share inspirational stories of people overcoming mental health challenges. Talk about celebrities and public figures who have dealt with mental health issues.
- If you have had experience with mental health issues, consider sharing some of your stories with me.
- If you are in treatment as well, give me examples and scenarios of your own life.

Empower me to be a better me.

- Help me imagine what positive things the future may hold.
- Help me understand that I have choices and options regarding my treatment.
- Inspire me to know that although I may have a long road ahead, that I can definitely manage it.
- Encourage me to be open about my experiences with my medication.
- Encourage me to get help for myself because I am worth it, and not just because others want me to.
- Help me realize who I can trust and who supports me.
- Encourage me to think about the people who care and to be open to accepting the care those people offer.
- Remind me of the good things I have done in my life, the positive things I have in my life, and all the reasons I have to live for.

Walk with me throughout this journey.

- Support me as my mental health needs may change over time.
- Sometimes I feel like I am going to let you down if I am not doing as well. Reassure me you are here for the good and the bad.
- Remind me that taking medication may help me, but not every medicine will be the right fit. Encourage me to be open to what my doctors have to say.
- Know that just letting me vent is helpful.
- Allow me to open up about my mental health struggles.

Know when to tell.

- Before anything, remember never keep any talk of suicide a secret. If I am talking about suicide or hurting myself, you have to tell an adult who can help.
- It's better to lose a friendship than to lose a friend. I might not love it at first, but in the long run, I will be grateful. You may have saved my life.

Take care of yourself, friend.

- Take time for yourself. You are your own first priority. You cannot take care of me if you are not taking care of you.
- Know that not everyone is ready to accept change at every point in their life.
- Do not feel like you failed if I am not ready to hear you.
- Do not feel discouraged if I do not instantly improve. It is a process.