



Constructing a Healthier Industry

Information Partner



how can I help?

HOW DO I LET SOMEONE KNOW THAT I THINK THEY MIGHT NEED HELP?

If someone you know seems down, depressed, angry or generally not themselves, it can be hard to know what to say. You might want to help them, but you don't know how.

We've included some advice for you on this fact sheet, but it's important to realise that everyone's different — everyone has different things that they're okay with talking about; everyone acts in different ways.

So, here's some ideas that may help you support a friend or family member that you're worried about:



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Talk...

Sometimes it can be hard to talk to someone who's not acting like they normally do. It can be hard to know what to say or how to start. However, if someone's depressed or anxious or even just going through a tough time at the moment, you could be their first step in getting help. Think about where you're going to talk to them, and when. It's a good idea to talk in a private place where you both feel okay.

...But listen more than talk

Sometimes when people want to talk, they're not asking for your advice. They might just need to get it all out. Listen as much as you can and try to get a better understanding of what they're really trying to say. You could say things like, "That sounds tough..." or "Sounds like you're going through a real hard

time at the moment". Let the other person say what they need to say and maybe give suggestions at the end.

Watch your body language

When you're talking to someone, your body language is important in helping them to feel comfortable. Sitting in a relaxed way and keeping up the eye contact lets them know you're listening. However, make sure you don't stare and don't look bored.

Use open-ended questions

It's a good idea to use open-ended questions, particularly when you're just starting the conversation. These are questions that require a long answer rather than just a "yes" or "no". For example, you could say "Can you tell me about...?" (eg. "Can you tell me how your relationship's going?" or "How are you getting on at school?") or just "What's going on for you...?"

Dealing with those difficult conversations

Sometimes when people are feeling down, they can find it hard to talk about their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. They might even get angry with you when you ask if they're okay. If this happens, it's important that you:

- Keep calm
- Be fair
- Respect their limits
- Admit you're wrong if you are
- Don't lose control or get angry.

Spend time together

Just making the time to hang out or do things with a family member or friend can be a good way to show them that you care. Spending time with them might also help you understand their thoughts and feelings.

Take care of YOU

Caring for another person can be hard on you. It's important that you take care of yourself as well. Try to take time out to relax and enjoy things like sport, friends, music or going for a walk. There are also support groups and services that can provide you with help and information. For more about these, see the caring for others fact sheet.

HOW DO I HELP SOMEONE?

It can also sometimes be hard to help someone with depression or anxiety. They may not see the point of anything. They may feel that no one can really help them. Or, alternately, they may rely on you as their only source of support. Remember that you're not a counsellor and they may need to get professional help.

What you can do and how much you can do really depends on your relationship with the person. Helping someone who's not ready to get help can be difficult, so on the next page we've put together some ideas on what to do (and what not to do) for someone you think might have depression or anxiety.

We've also included a list of contact details for phone and web-based support services, that you can get in touch with if someone you know needs help — or if you yourself need help in helping them.

WHAT HELPS?

Here's a list of things that may help when you've got a friend or family member experiencing depression or anxiety.

- Spending time talking about what life's like for them.

- Letting them know that you've noticed they seem unhappy, quiet, angry...
- Being supportive and letting them know that you're there to listen, not to judge.
- Suggesting that they go to a doctor or a health professional (such as a social worker, psychologist, youth worker or counsellor) - you might need to help them make an appointment or go with them on the day.
- Making sure you have the phone numbers for their doctor or health professional so you can contact them if your friend or family member is in danger of hurting themselves.
- Helping them find out information on depression or anxiety, suggesting that they log on to a website or get some books out of the library.
- Talking openly about depression
- Suggesting they try some self-help strategies (see the getting active and getting the sleep you need factsheets for some ideas).
- Encouraging them to get involved in things, especially when friends and other people are going to be there too.
- Making sure they're looking after themselves, that they're eating well and getting some exercise.
- Just ringing, SMS'ing or emailing them.
AND
- Trying to get other close friends and family members to do some of these things as well.

WHAT DOESN'T HELP?

These are things to avoid when you've got a friend or family member experiencing depression or anxiety.

- Trying to deal with everything yourself and not getting professional help from a doctor or a trusted adult when the person needs it.
- Putting the pressure on by telling them:
 - "snap out of it"
 - "get your act together"
 - "cheer up"
 - "hurry up and feel better"
 - "just don't think about it"
 - "get over it"
 - "nothing's wrong"
 - "you're just imagining it".
- Staying away from them, avoiding them (this will often just make them feel more alone and won't help to solve their problems).
- Telling them that they just need to stay busy or to get out more.
- Pressuring them into partying more or using drugs or alcohol to make them feel better.
- Assuming that the problem will just go away by itself.

GETTING HELP

The OzHelp Foundation

1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357)

www.ozhelp.org.au

BeyondBlue

For information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* info line on 1300 22 4636

Lifeline 131 114

Lifeline is a national 24-hour counselling service. [www.lifeline.org.au]

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Kids Helpline is a national 24-hour counselling service for children and young people. There is also an online chat-based help service on their website. [www.kidshelp.com.au]

WEB-BASED SERVICES

ReachOut! [www.reachout.com.au]

While they don't operate as a counselling service, ReachOut! offers information and referrals to young people experiencing a wide variety of tough times - with relationships, physical sickness, abuse, drug and alcohol use, as well as with mental health problems. ReachOut! is an initiative of the Inspire Foundation.

Itsallright.org [www.itsallright.org]

Itsallright.org is SANE's website for young people with a parent or friend affected by mental illness.

