

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

COUNSELING AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

215-898-7021

(including nights/weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)

3624 MARKET STREET, FIRST FLOOR WEST
Philadelphia, PA 19104

MON | FRI 9 am - 5 pm
TUES | WED | THURS 9 am - 7 pm
SAT 10 am - 3 pm

www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps



THINGS YOU *can do* TO HELP A FRIEND

Whether friends approach you about a problem you want to approach them about a concern, be mindful of these general guidelines:

Find a place that is private and comfortable to talk. Put electronic devices away and dedicate your time and attention to the conversation.

Be specific about why you are concerned. Tell your friend what you have observed, such as her eating less or him missing class. Use examples.

Listen. People in need benefit most from a friend who actively listens to their concerns. Do not rush to fix, correct, or disagree with your friend ... just listen. While being an active listener, look at your friend directly, ask him or her to clarify things you do not understand, summarize what your friend says and ask questions to help your friend take a closer look at what he or she is saying. When people feel they've been heard and understood, they are more receptive to ideas and advice.

A GUIDE FOR PENN STUDENTS

College friends learn together how to deal successfully with balancing academic and extracurricular stress, developing independence, and experiencing new people, cultures, and ideas. Friends help each other through difficult times like break-ups or family tragedies.

WHEN TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT A FRIEND

Everyone feels depressed or upset at one time or another. But when distress persists and interferes with school or social life, there may be cause for concern.

PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS YOUR FRIEND MAY NEED HELP

- Overtly suicidal thoughts, such as referring to suicide as a current option
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Irritability, constant anxiety or tearfulness
- Deterioration in physical presence or hygiene
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (agitation, withdrawal)
- Marked changes in concentration and motivation
- Frequently missing classes

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Written note or verbal statement that has a sense of hopelessness or finality
- Direct statements indicating family problems or personal losses (such as illness, death of a family member, financial problems or a break-up)
- Expressions of concern about a your friend by faculty, staff members, or other classmates

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP A FRIEND

VALIDATE. Understand, repeat, and acknowledge your friend's distress and feelings. Validation often calms people because they no longer have to convince the listener that they have a serious problem.

AVOID minimizing your friend's concerns. Don't say "Everything will be better" or "Don't worry."

RESIST the inclination to judge, evaluate, or criticize, even if your friend asks your opinion. These responses could push your friend away.

BRAINSTORM options. After you've validated your friend's problem, work together on resolutions. Suggest resources, such as friends, family, clergy, RAs/GAs, advisors, or other campus professionals.

RESPECT your friend's wishes for confidentiality, but don't make promises you can't keep. You may need to talk to a professional about your concerns.

KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS

Recognize situations where you need to contact professionals to help your friend.

Examples include:

- Your friend expresses thoughts or desires to self-harm or hurt others
- Your friend acts differently, withdrawing, seeming depressed, agitated, and anxious

MAKING A REFERRAL TO CAPS

Suggesting counseling is a way to help your friend.

- Assure your friend that seeking professional help is a sign of strength and courage
- If applicable, share your own counseling experiences
- Offer to walk with your friend to CAPS or call CAPS together to schedule an initial appointment

WHY COME *to* CAPS

Don't manage a friend's stress alone. There are professionals across campus who can help if you feel overwhelmed, fearful, or uncomfortable. Reach out to your House Dean, RA or GA. Call CAPS or the Student Health Service. You will be helping your friend by getting others involved.

Remember to take care of yourself. It's great to be a supportive friend, but you need not be a hero. Tend to your own needs. Don't let helping a friend cause you stress, health problems or academic difficulties. Call CAPS to talk to a clinician yourself.

CONTACT CAPS

CALL OR STOP BY TO HAVE
AN INITIAL CONSULTATION

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Penn RESOURCES

CAPS

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215-898-7021

OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN

215-898-8456

HELP LINE

215-898-HELP (4357)

RAP LINE

(Reach A Peer, 9PM - 1AM)

215-573-2RAP (2727)

SPECIAL SERVICES

215-898-6600

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

215-746-3535

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE/ STUDENT INTERVENTION SERVICES

215-898-6081

WEINGARTEN LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

215-573-9235

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