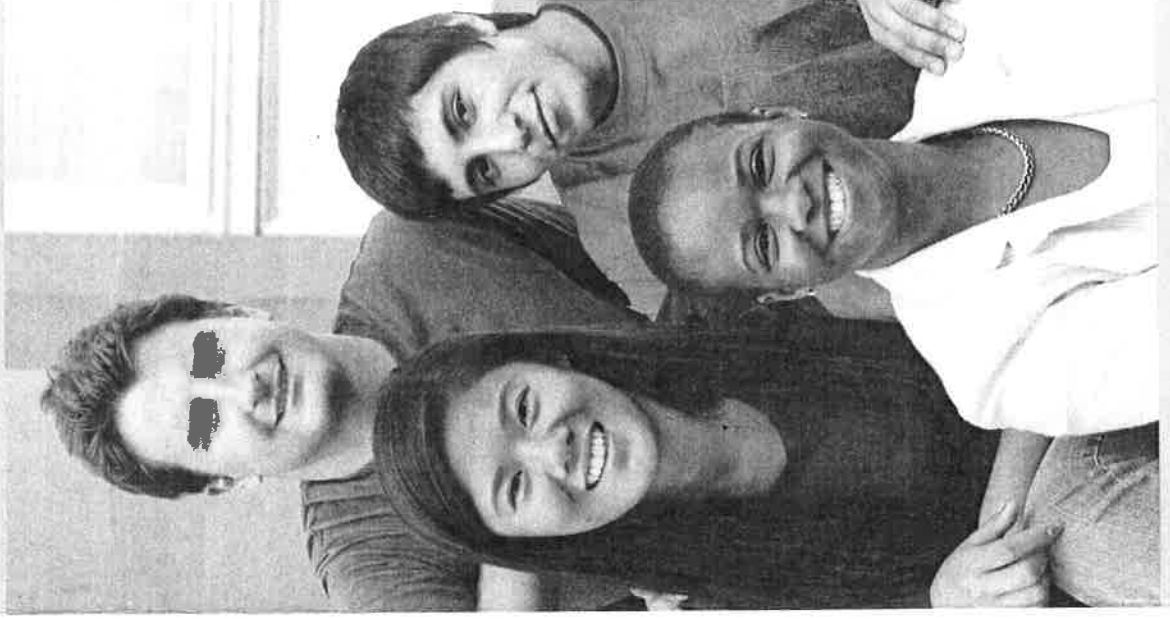


Where to Go for Help

- **Mental Health America Information Center: 1-800-969-6642.** Free information on over 200 mental health topics, referral to local providers, and a directory of their nationwide network of providers. www.mentalhealthamerica.org.
- **Mental Help Net** contains a wealth of information, including local resources, self-tests, support and educational materials. www.mentalhelp.net.
- **Self-Help Group Sourcebook Online** at www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp.
- **National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255.** Also provides support for friends. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Helping a Friend



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

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What to do when a friend has a problem

Helping Basics

Be honest with yourself. Know your limitations. Make sure you have the time and energy to give your friend before you agree to help.

Be honest with your friend. If you're not able to help at all, for any reason, say so.

You may have a conflict in values, be too close to the situation yourself, or be overwhelmed with your own problems. Help your friend find another resource.

Don't take it on alone. You may not feel qualified to help your friend with all of his or her problems.

Learn about resources such as counselors, health educators or health care providers. Get names and phone numbers your friend can use to find help from qualified professionals.

Protect confidences. Keep your friend's concerns confidential unless your friend or others are in danger.

Keep in touch. Contact your friend regularly. Encourage him or her to continue talking with you and to reach out to other friends for a wider support network.

Do you want to help a friend, but don't know where to start?

Things you can do:

- **Listen** and be supportive.
- **Brainstorm** and problem-solve potential solutions.
- **Encourage** your friend to talk with other friends and/or family members.
- **Direct** your friend to community resources such as counselors and health care providers.

Remember, you can't do everything. Don't take responsibility for fixing or solving your friend's problem. You can't make another person seek help or make life changes.

If you think a friend needs help...

Don't ignore it. Approach your friend and, without judgment, let him or her know your concern. Stating your concern gets it into the open and shows you care. It might also make your friend face the problem.

Use I-statements to express your feelings. "I'm concerned about how much you drink." "I'm concerned about how sad and withdrawn you've been lately."

Educate yourself about potential resources to help your friend. Counselors, psychologists and health educators all can help. They can also help you as you try to help your friend.

How to Listen

Active listening means giving your full attention to the other person. You often can help your friend clarify thinking and see the situation in a different light.

Listening Tips

- **Take the time.** Meet when you can spend time to listen to your friend and hear his or her concerns.
- **Encourage your friend to talk,** and don't interrupt. Listen and nod your head, without agreeing or disagreeing.
- **Clarify what your friend is saying.** Restate the basic facts and ideas as you heard them. Ask open-ended questions. This will help increase your own understanding of the problem as well as your friend's. (He or she may not be clear about the problem either.)
- **Reflect your friend's feelings.** Mirror back what you hear and understand. "You felt hurt?" or "It sounds like you were disappointed." This can help clarify the problem.
- **Keep your own feelings, advice and judgments in check.** Your solution to the problem may not be appropriate or even wanted. How you would solve the problem may not work for your friend.
- **Don't push.** Your friend may only be ready to tell you a certain amount.
- **Validate** your friend's work on the problem.
- **Be compassionate** and respectful.
- **Use appropriate body language.** Sit facing your friend, in an open, relaxed position. Lean forward to show your interest and attention.

Someone to really listen—without judgment, without offering advice, and without giving solutions—is often the main thing a person needs.

How to Brainstorm

Sometimes a friend just needs to bounce ideas off someone. By talking through possible solutions, you can help your friend recognize and address the problem.

- **Begin by brainstorming possible solutions.** Be careful to do this without judgment or critique. Come up with as many ideas as possible.
- **Then analyze the idea list.** What are the benefits of each? What would be realistic? What would work? Are there resources that could help your friend with certain solutions?
- **Help your friend decide** on a course of action.
- **Offer your support** once your friend has chosen a positive course of action. Point out any resources that are available to help.