

# Supporting Your Friends

## Things to do.

## Things NOT to do.



"I've noticed \_\_\_\_\_. Are you O.K.?"

**Notice**

"It seems like you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_. Have I got that right?"

**Listen to Understand**

"It must be so hard to carry these thoughts and feelings."

**Realize**

"Is there something I can do? Are there others supporting you?"

**Find out.**

"Let's do something to give you a break from this heavy stuff you're carrying."

**Refocus**

"Do you mind if I check back about this again?"

**Remember**

"You don't need to feel that way."

**Talk them out of their feelings.**

"I will drop everything when you need me. I will get you through this."

**Become their life preserver**

"You're not even trying"  
"You should be over this by now"  
"All you need to do is ..."

**Pressure them to be better**

**Tell everyone... or tell no one**

Treat your friend the way you would want to be treated. You have been trusted and need to protect that. But caring for your friend also means knowing when they need help beyond what your supportive friendship can do. Holding secrets can put your friend - and you! - in a dangerous place. Good friends get help!

"...."  
"Blah, Blah, Blah..."

## Depression

Absence of hope, not opposite of happiness

**Know:** It feels like all that exists is the immediate moment and if that feels horrible it's hard to believe that life will ever be different than this.

**Say:** "It seems like things are dark and heavy right now. What do you need that I can help with today?"

**Try:** Help your friend find and gather reminders that goodness and hope are still part of their lives by collecting photo's, songs, art, memories. And don't stop inviting them along - even if they never come.

## Anxiety

Fears tell feelings that life is dangerous

**Know:** Fearful feelings have overpowered logic. Trying to talk someone out of the worry and dread without caring for the feelings rarely helps.

**Say:** "It looks like you're feeling anxious and I don't mind. Can I just hang out here with you?"

**Try:** Help your friend create a list of things they can do to wake up the logical, concrete side of their brain when the anxious feelings start to overpower it - like noticing and naming things around them that they can see, touch, smell, hear and know.

## Self-harm

Communicates inner pain too big for words

**Know:** Self-harm isn't the same as being suicidal. It is an attempt to manage pain inside that feels like it's too big to be contained.

**Say:** "I'm amazed at the amount of pain you must be carrying inside. I'm willing to listen if you'd like to talk about it."

**Try:** Help your friend to recognize what things trigger their self-harm and to brainstorm a list of alternatives for calming and distracting their feelings when the urge for harm comes.