

WHEN A FRIEND NEEDS HELP

Worried about a friend? The following warning signs could be clues that your friend needs help.

Depression

Does your friend show signs of depression?
See sidebar at right for the signs.

Signs of Depression

Feelings of sadness
Sleep disturbances
Changes in appetite
Changes in weight
Loss of concentration

Talking about Suicide

Does your friend talk about suicide? Don't assume he or she is just kidding. In fact, this is a serious warning sign. Tell a trusted adult—immediately.

Giving Away Prized Possessions

Does your friend appear to be getting rid of things that once were important, or providing friends with a tangible memento? This may indicate an expectation that he or she will exist only in memory.

Use of Alcohol or Other Drugs

Use, or increased use, of alcohol or other drugs can signal an attempt to self-medicate feelings of sadness or hopelessness.

Loss of interest in friends and activities
Lack of energy
Neglect of personal appearance
Restlessness
Self-criticism
Self-mutilation (cutting)

A Sudden Improvement in Mood

A sudden lift of spirits in someone who is depressed can signal a spurt of energy that could enable him or her to act on a suicidal intention.

Name: _____

A GOOD FRIEND IS A GOOD LISTENER

When your friend needs a sympathetic ear, you need to use the skills of active listening.

- 1. Find a quiet, private place to talk.**
- 2. Show that you are interested.**
 - through your body language
 - by your facial expression
 - by comments like “mm-hmm,” “yes,” and so on.

Note: For some people, it’s more comfortable to talk about feelings when the other person is not looking at you.

- 3. Refrain from making suggestions.**

Your friend wants to be heard, not for you to “fix” it.
- 4. Refrain from interrupting or grabbing the floor.**

Let your friend continue talking as long as he or she needs to.
- 5. Ask clarifying questions.**

By asking questions, you show you are interested and you also make sure you understand.
- 6. Listen for, and validate, emotions.**

Try to hear the feelings that go with the story. Say things like: “It sounds like you were really upset,” or “That must have been scary.”
- 7. Put yourself in your friend’s shoes.**

Try to see the situation from your friend’s perspective. For instance, something that might not bother you at all could be very distressing to your friend.