

5 Tips for supporting a friend going through a tough time

When we are extremely distressed, things happen in our bodies and minds that make it difficult to think properly and coherently. As a result, having an outside person around for support is extremely beneficial.

While it would be great to have a step-by-step guide on how to help a friend who is going through a difficult time, (and as you've probably worked out by now) difficult situations and human emotions don't follow fixed formulas. Instead, here are some pointers on how to show up for a buddy with compassion and empathy, and to let them know you're there.



01

Compassionately Listen

Listening is one of the most beneficial things you can do for someone who is going through a difficult time. If you feel a friend or family member is struggling with difficult issues:

- Approach them and inform them you are there for them
- Ask if they would like to speak about it.
- Inquire about their experience.
- Respond to their predicament with compassion (remember to maintain a friendly, neutral look - making overly "sympathetic" faces can actually make it more difficult for some people to communicate about how they're feeling).
- To demonstrate that you understand, repeat what you hear.
- Avoid making judgments.
- Direct them to useful resources.

Encourage them to develop good coping mechanisms

02

Observing our habits and strategising how to deal with them can help us enhance our mental health. Inquire about what works and what doesn't for them. There are numerous strategies for dealing with adversity. Discuss coping skills with them and assist them in developing an action plan. Inquire about the practical steps they wish to take and how they would like assistance in carrying them out. Check in on how they're doing over time and talk to them about helpful coping mechanisms such as talking to a friend, practicing mindfulness, exercising and journaling.

03

Pay attention to them

When our mental health is on the decline, there are typically early warning signs. For instance, a person may avoid social situations, drink excessively, lose interest in activities they formerly enjoyed, or have difficulty completing daily responsibilities. It is a good idea to talk with your friend about the warning signs since they vary greatly from person to person. They'll be more aware of their surroundings, and you'll be better able to understand what's happening. Asking them, on the other hand, what they envision as progress is a fantastic idea. A person's self-esteem can be greatly boosted by emphasizing their progress.



04

Refrain from attempting to mend it

When our friends are struggling they may not be prepared to receive our wise counsel, even if it is excellent. If you share an experience that you feel is comparable, it may seem dismissive to your friend. Each difficult circumstance has its own unique challenges. Avoid using cliches and false optimism, as well as any statement that begins "at least." Remember that experiencing sadness about tragic occurrences is normal and natural; we don't always need to uplift others or point out a bright side. Your responsibility in this situation is to reassure your friend that they are not alone and to express your willingness to support them as they navigate this.

Execute tasks for them

05

Offering to assist your friend with daily tasks might be a tremendous relief if they are preoccupied with personal difficulties. It might be simpler for them to deal with their problems if you run to the shop or do the laundry for them. Additionally, it will demonstrate how much you care for them. Ask them directly if they require anything, or schedule a time to drop by with some basic groceries. It's a great method to express your concern. Inquire about their feelings, and then pay attention to their reply without passing judgment. Asking someone how they're doing in a straightforward, open-ended manner demonstrates your interest in them. Instead of speaking up or interjecting, pay close attention to what is being said.

