

Tips for helping a friend with a mental health or substance abuse issue

10. If you are worried about a friend's behavior or attitude, talk with him or her as soon as possible.
9. Meet your friend in a comfortable place where you can talk privately. Talk in a calm and considerate manner about the specific things you have seen or felt that caused you to worry about his or her health.
8. Voice your concern in a supportive and careful way. Here are three tips:
Use "I" statements. For example, "I'm worried about your safety," or, "It makes me afraid to hear you talk about suicide." Avoid "You" statements that sound critical. For example, "You're out of control!" or, "You must be crazy!" Avoid giving simple solutions. For example, "Everything would be okay if you just stopped..."
7. Give advice in the form of options. For instance, recommend the counseling center for your friend to visit or suggest support groups you think may help your friend work through the problem.
6. Your friend may deny that he or she has a problem. If your friend won't listen to you, you may need to tell someone else. Consider talking to your friend's parents, a resident advisor, a counselor, or another trusted adult.
5. Remember that you cannot make someone get help or change his or her attitudes and behaviors. You can make a significant difference by sharing your concerns, providing support, and knowing where to get more information.
4. Be sure to take time for yourself. It is important to pay attention to your own health while helping a friend.
3. Although you may be willing to do anything and everything to help, don't try to take over your friend's life. Offer support, but be patient.
2. Mental health problems can be hard to explain, and your friend may have trouble putting how he/she feels into words. Be reassuring and non-judgmental, and try your best to understand your friend's problem.
1. To be a good friend, never keep talk of suicide a secret, even if a friend has asked you to. Take it seriously and seek help immediately from a trusted adult or health professional. It is better to risk losing a friendship than to risk losing a friend forever.

For more information, contact Mental Health America of Wisconsin at 414.276.3122, or via Email: info@mhawisconsin.org.

Mental Health America is a United Way of Greater Milwaukee Agency.



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