HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

With mental health and other wellness concerns
GOALS

To know action steps to take and resources to use to help a friend struggling with mental health or wellness concerns

To understand your role as a support

To be better attuned to our own wellness as caregivers
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Be a trustworthy human
You are not a pro
Take care of yourself
CIRCLES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Ben Shneiderman’s Circles of Relationships
MENTAL HEALTH V. WELL BEING

Optimal Mental Well-being

Individuals having high sense of subjective well-being despite suffering from a mental illness.

Ideal state of functioning where person experiences happiness with no mental illness.

Maximum mental illness

Lowest level of functioning where a person feels languishing and has significant mental illness.

Minimum Mental Illness

Subjective state of grief or unhappiness that a person experiences in the absence of any noticeable mental health disorder.

Minimal mental well-being
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO HELP A FRIEND?

A plan
Correct info
Willingness

Also doesn’t hurt:
- Some skills
- Self-awareness
- Authenticity
A PLAN

Mental Health First Aid ACTION PLAN

- Approach, assess and assist with any crisis
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Give support and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage other supports
APPROACH

Seize the awkward!
APPROACH

In Your Corner
Boundaries are your friends. Your role is as a friend—you are a support, not a professional, and not a cure.

Give yourself grace. You might not be “good” at this. That is not the point.
ASSESS

Is this a crisis or emergency?

- Emergency = imminent threat of harm to self or others
  - Mental health crisis – any situation in which a person's behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others
  - Includes suicidal and homicidal ideation
  - No place to stay that night
  - Afraid to go home
  - Medical complications
    - If you cannot tell if what is happening is due to mental or physical health, call 911 (ie, panic attacks)
Don’t know? Call in some support. 911 or a hotline like the Boys Town National Hotline can help you assess. Build a team around yourself as you build a team around your friend.
LISTEN (ACTIVELY AND NONJUDGMENTALLY)

If they start to talk →

Put down your phone (somewhere you can’t see it)

Shut your mouth 😕

Turn off your inner monologue too 😕
  ▪ That’s all judgments, biases, advice-giving, all versions of “I told you so,” that eager voice who just wants everyone to be happy, the part of you taking it personally…

If you can’t do this, you might not be the person to do this
  ▪ And that’s okay! Now go find somebody else who can help!
Debrief with yourself later. Take the opportunity to reflect, learn about yourself, and savor the feeling of being there for your friend.
GIVE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

Give them courage, not BS

- “There are good treatments for _______."
- “I know you can do this.”
- “I can help you get connected.”
- “There’s a great hotline can help us.”
- “You’re strong.”
- “I’m here.”
ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL HELP

Many mental health concerns aren’t DIY fixes

If you think professional help is needed, be ready with some suggestions

If you don’t know, agree on a plan to find out

Offer to help connect and “ride along” if needed
ENCOURAGE OTHER SUPPORTS

Self help: not a substitute for professional help but empowers people by reminding them of their own agency and control

- Sleep, exercise, proper diet, and social connection
- Meditation and mindfulness

Resources for psychoeducation

Support groups
SELF CARE

WHAT IF MY FRIEND IS MAD AT ME FOR ASKING?

Could happen.

Might be short term and will resolve with time.

No guarantee will resolve.

Take heart in doing the right thing for your friend.
WHAT IF MY FRIEND DOESN’T WANT HELP?

Could happen.

Might be short term and resolve with time: continue to be there and to be open.

Get support (via another friend or hotline if needed).
WHAT IF MY FRIEND IS SUICIDAL?

Source: NAMI
A PLAN

Mental Health First Aid ACTION PLAN

A - Approach, assess and assist with any crisis
L - Listen non-judgmentally
G - Give support and information
E - Encourage appropriate professional help
E - Encourage other supports
GOOD INFO: RESOURCES TO KNOW

For psychoeducation: Helpguide.org, https://www.helpguide.org/

For online screens: Mental Health America, https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/


For support groups:
- Listing at the Kim Foundation, https://www.thekimfoundation.org/support-groups/
- NAMI, https://naminebraska.org/support-groups-classes-and-events/support-groups/
- For grief support, The Collective for Hope, https://thecollectiveforhope.org/

GOOD INFO: RESOURCES TO KNOW

For treatment:

- Or ask your medical doctor for referrals
- No insurance coverage? CHC or Methodist Community Counseling
  - One World, [https://www.oneworldomaha.org/](https://www.oneworldomaha.org/)
  - Charles Drew, [https://charlesdrew.com/](https://charlesdrew.com/
  - Methodist CC, [https://bestcare.org/specialties/community-counseling-program](https://bestcare.org/specialties/community-counseling-program)

Resource needs: 211, [https://www.ne211.org/](https://www.ne211.org/)
GOOD INFO: RESOURCES TO KNOW

https://www.bethe1to.com/
- Suicide prevention

https://seizetheawkward.org/
- Support a friend with mental illness

https://www.loveisrespect.org/
- Healthy relationship info
GOOD INFO: RESOURCES TO KNOW

- Suicidal ideation: National Suicide Prevention 24/7 Lifeline, 800-273-8255
- Homelessness: United Way 24/7 211 hotline, 2-1-1, or 402-444-6666
- IPV: Women’s Center for Advancement 24/7 hotline, 402-345-7273
- Family conflict: NE Family 24/7 Helpline, 888-866-8660
GOOD INFO: RESOURCES TO KNOW

911 Emergency Services

Go-to resource when personal safety is compromised

- State clearly that situation involves a mental health crisis

Able to perform well checks in non-emergency situations

Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) officers can be requested

OPD employs MH counselors that also respond to MH reports

In NE, officers can put a person under emergency protective custody if needed or contact Crisis Response for immediate and on-going MH care

988 will go live in July
SELF CARE

Two heads are better than one. Use these resources to obtain professional consultation when needed.
What barriers or challenges do we face that negatively impact our willingness to assist another person in distress?

- Don’t know what to do
- Not enough time
- Personal bias
- Stigma
- Fear
- Too hard
- Not my job
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of support
RE: SELF AWARENESS

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes “What the hell is water?”
CULTIVATING SELF AWARENESS

Be quiet, take a walk

Be honest with yourself, but don’t be mean

Take some fun quizzes
  - Implicit bias tests: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
  - Your American Dream score: https://movingupusa.com/what-is-your-american-dream-score/
  - Big-5 Personality Test: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/personality-quiz/

Talk to people and do a lot of listening (ask for feedback about yourself from those close to you)

Try journaling

Try mindfulness or meditation

See a therapist
SELF CARE

An accumulation of small daily actions and reflection (mental hygiene)

Boundaries
Self-compassion
Connection
Self-knowledge