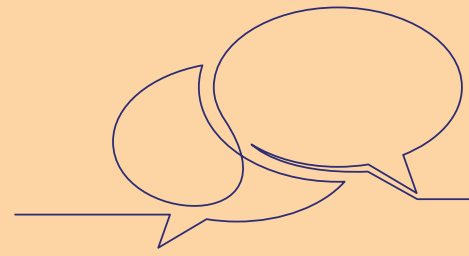


Helping a friend:

What if I'm not sure what to do?



Seeing a friend struggling with their mental health can be confusing and scary. You might want to help but worry about what to say, what to do or whether you might make things worse.

If you've ever felt this way, you're not alone. Being nervous is a sign that you care and want to support your friend in the best way possible.

Below you'll find 10 common fears or worries and how to manage them when they show up.

1

"What if I say the wrong thing?"

You might think:

- *What if I make things worse?*
- *What if I upset them?*
- *I don't know what to say.*

Remember: You don't need the perfect words. Listening, showing you care and helping your friend connect with support can make a difference.

2

"What if they get mad at me?"

You might worry:

- *What if they stop talking to me?*
- *What if they think I'm being nosy?*

Checking in with someone can feel awkward. Your friend might not respond the way you hope, but that doesn't mean you did something wrong.

Try: "I care about you, and I've noticed you've seemed like you're having a hard time. I'm here if you want to talk."



3

"What if I break their trust?"

You might think:

- *They told me not to tell anyone.*
- *If I tell an adult, they'll never trust me again.*

There is an important difference between **keeping a secret** and **protecting someone's safety**.

If a friend tells you they may hurt themselves, someone is hurting them or they aren't safe, **tell a trusted adult**. You don't have to handle it alone.

Remember: Getting help is not betraying your friend.

4

"What if I lose my friend?"

You might worry:

- What if they think I'm judging them?
- What if they don't want to be friends anymore?

Friendships are important, so this fear makes sense. But a healthy friendship doesn't require you to ignore serious concerns.

You can care about your friend while also getting help when they need it.

5

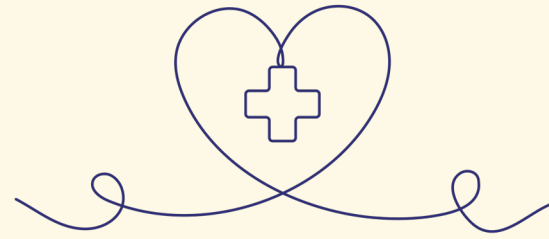
"Is it my job to fix this?"

You might think:

- I have to make them feel better.
- If something happens, it'll be my fault.
- I'm the only person they can talk to.

You are their friend. You are not their therapist, doctor or crisis counselor.

Your job isn't to fix everything. Your job can be to **notice, listen, support and connect your friend with someone who can help.**



6

"What if an adult makes everything worse?"

You might worry:

- The adults will overreact.
- My friend will get in trouble.
- Their parents will be angry.

Sometimes involving an adult can feel scary. But when someone's safety is involved, getting help is more important than keeping the situation secret.

Choose a trusted adult such as a parent, caregiver, teacher, counselor, coach, school staff member or another adult you trust.

7

"What will everyone else think?"

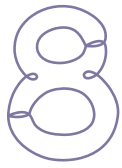
You might worry about:

- Gossip
- Rumors
- Being judged
- Other people finding out
- Losing friends

You don't have to tell everyone what is happening.

Keep your friend's personal information private, except when sharing it is needed to help keep them safe.





"How do I know if this is serious?"

You might wonder:

- *Maybe they're just having a bad day.*
- *What if I'm overreacting?*
- *How do I know when I should tell someone?*

You don't have to be an expert to ask for help.

If you're worried about your friend's safety, it's okay to tell a trusted adult, even if you're not completely sure what's going on.



"What if they don't want help?"

Your friend might say:

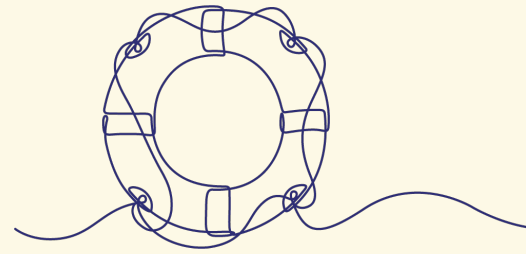
- *"I'm fine."*
- *"Leave me alone."*
- *"You don't understand."*

That can feel frustrating or discouraging.

You can say:

"Okay. I won't pressure you, but I care about you and I'm here if you want to talk."

If you believe your friend is unsafe, **don't let their refusal stop you from getting a trusted adult involved.**



"What if talking about suicide makes things worse?"

Some people worry that asking about suicide will put the idea in someone's head.

That's a myth. Asking someone directly and calmly about suicide does not cause suicidal thoughts or make someone become suicidal.

If you're seriously concerned, you can ask:

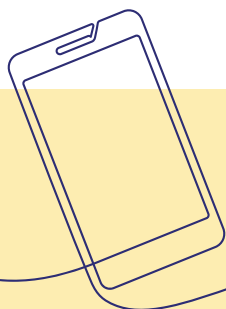
"Are you thinking about suicide or hurting yourself?"

You don't have to handle their answer by yourself. **Tell a trusted adult and get help.**

Remember: You don't have to do this alone

Helping a friend who is struggling can feel scary, especially when you aren't sure what to say or do. You don't have to have all the answers or fix the problem. **Being a good friend means listening, showing you care and helping your friend connect with a trusted adult when they need more support.**

If you're worried about your friend's safety, **don't keep it to yourself.** Speaking up is an act of caring, not betrayal. And remember to take care of yourself, too. **You can support your friend without carrying their struggles alone.**



If you believe your friend is in immediate danger to themselves or others, call 911.

If you have concerns about your friend but are unsure what to do or say, you can call or text 988 or text HOME to 741-741 to speak with a mental health professional. Wolfson's 24/7 kids and teens helpline (904.202.7900) can also be used to support young people and parents navigating crisis.