



helping a friend going through a tough time

When a friend is going through a tough time, it can be hard to know what to do or say.

You might have noticed they:

- don't seem like themselves, or
- they're acting differently.

You might:

- let them know that you care
- ask them what you can do to support them
- let them know that you're there to help them.

They might not open up at first, but showing them you have their back can give your friend strength and hope. This also lets them know you're someone they can talk to if they do decide to open up later on.

Asking your friend if they need help can be hard, especially when you don't know what kind of help you can offer. Checking in can make a big difference to the person having a tough time.



What if my friend doesn't want any help?

For many people, reaching out for support can be really difficult. Some of your friends might need time and space.

Be patient with your friend. Don't judge them or get frustrated if they don't take you up on your offer of support. Remind them that you're there if they need you and give them time.

Sometimes you might need to involve someone else – like a trusted adult. If you do decide to tell someone, try to let your friend know that you're planning on doing this first and encourage them to get involved in the conversation.



What can I say to help my friend?

It can be hard to know how to start the conversation. Sometimes it can be as simple as, 'are you doing OK? I've noticed we haven't been in contact as much recently' – or mention what you've noticed that's different.

Some things to help you plan:

- Are you in a good headspace and ready to have the chat?
- Have you had a look at the headspace website to get a better understanding of what might be going on for them?
- Have you got enough time, and are you free from distractions?
- Have you chosen somewhere private?
- Have you found a time that's good for them to chat?

If it looks like your friend would benefit from additional support, you can say things like:

- 'Have you talked to anyone else about this? It's great you've talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and support from a health worker.'
- 'It doesn't have to be super intense and you can make choices about what you want to talk about.'

- 'A GP can help you with this stuff. You can find one that bulk-bills, so you don't have to pay. I can go along with you, if you want.'
- 'There are some great websites you can check out to get more information. Have you heard of headspace or ReachOut?'
- 'Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone from places like eheadspace, Kids Helpline and Lifeline. All of these services are anonymous and can help you figure out what's going on for you and where to go for the right support.'
- 'I know you're not feeling great now, but with the right support, you can get through this. Lots of people do.'
- 'It's OK to feel this way and I'm here and have your back.' Let your friend know you believe their concern and let them know they're not alone.



Look after yourself

Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult, so it's important that you take care of yourself, too. You can check out our tips for a healthy headspace to look after yourself. These include:

- get into life
- create connections
- learn skills for tough times
- eat well
- stay active
- get enough sleep
- cut back on alcohol and other drugs.



Try to remember that you're their friend and not their counsellor. Be realistic about what you can and can't do. Set boundaries for yourself to make sure that you're doing the best thing for you, your friend and the friendship.

Getting support

If you need support, it's a good idea to reach out for extra help. A good place to start is a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.

You can also contact a headspace centre or eheadspace if you would prefer to chat to someone online or over the phone.

If you or your friend need medical help right now contact 000.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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