

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND STUDENT GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH

Just like adults, kids and teens can have mental health conditions. Here are some things to look for and what to do if you think a friend might need help.

How will I know if something is wrong? Here are some common signs:

- **Feeling very sad or withdrawn everyday for more than two weeks.** This could mean crying regularly, suddenly not wanting to hang out anymore or tired all of the time.
- **Self-harming actions such as cutting or burning.**
- **Threatening to harm or kill oneself, or threatening to harm themselves or others.** Take it seriously when a friend says something like this.
- **Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason.** This could also include seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real.
- **Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight.** Also, significant weight loss or weight gain.
- **Extreme out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors.** This can even be driving really fast and not obeying traffic laws, especially if it is new behavior.
- **Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.** Coming to class hung over, showing up to sporting events intoxicated or wanting to bring drugs or alcohol into daily activities is not normal.

Start the conversation

"I'm concerned about you. What can I do to help?"

"I've noticed you haven't been acting like yourself lately. Is something going on?"

"I've noticed you're [sleeping more, eating less, etc.]. Is everything ok?"

"Let's sit down together and look for places to get help. I can go with you too."

Avoid saying things like: "You'll get over it." "Toughen up." or "I'm sure you'll be fine. Don't worry so much."

How can I help?

Talk to an adult to get advice on how to help your friend. Consider talking to a family member, trusted friend, school counselor or advisor, teacher or coach, or faith leader.

24/7 Crisis Response Services:

If your friend is in immediate danger of self-harm, please call 911.

- Centralized Assessment Team (C.A.T.): 1-866-830-6011 or 714-517-6353. This team talks to kids and teens to see what type of help they need, which could include going to an inpatient psychiatric hospital to keep them safe.
- 1-800-Suicide (1-800-784-2433): a national hotline number where calls will be answered by trained counselors who will give local referral numbers.