

Tell us what you think!



HOW TO OFFER SUPPORT HELP-GIVING

Check out the evidence!

Although **35.3%** of students report having dealt with mental health challenges,¹ few students report being able to provide the needed help and support to a peer/friend/family member.²

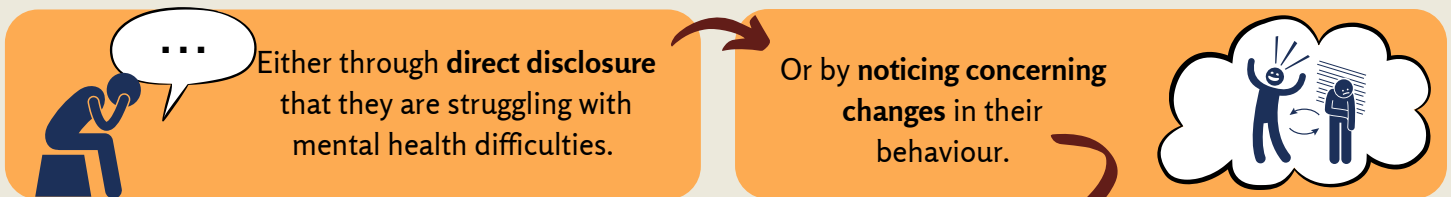
WHY IS HELP-GIVING IMPORTANT?

Research shows that an individual's first experience when disclosing their mental health distress can predict whether they will seek further support. Thus, it is crucial to make the first disclosure positive and ensure the individual receives the support they need.



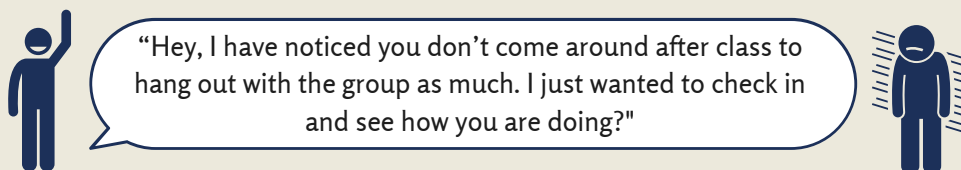
HOW CAN WE PROVIDE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT?

Step 1: Identify that your friend is struggling.



If you notice concerning changes...

EXPLAIN, without judgment or assumptions, that you have noticed these changes. **STATE** your concern, and **ASK** them how they are doing.



Avoid using phrases like **"what's wrong?"**. It may be difficult for the person to pinpoint exactly what they are feeling or why, or they may not be ready or comfortable to discuss their feelings.



Instead, try to let them know that you are available if at any point they need to talk or need support.

"Hey, I have noticed you haven't been yourself lately. Let me know if ever you want to talk"



? What if I am wrong? What if my friend gets awkward/angry?

Know that you were just looking out for your friend. It's better to be wrong but show you care than stay silent and leave your friend to suffer without offering support!

Step 2: Offer your full, undivided attention.

View the **Effective Communication resource**

If your friend decides to open up, make sure to give them your full attention (avoid distractions such as being on your phone), and to have enough time to fully hear them out.





Step 3: Provide the support they need.

Don't try to problem solve. Hear them out and acknowledge the difficulties they are facing.



"That must be really difficult for you right now"

ASK how you can support them.

They will either know what they need, or, if they can't think of anything, give them **options to choose from**:



- someone to hang out with (e.g., going for a walk, playing a game)
- someone to support them to seek therapy or resources for support



Keep in mind: It's ok to just hang out without any pressure to talk about the difficulties your friend is facing.

Since you're likely not struggling with the same difficulties right now, you might feel that you need to get your friend to open up and talk. However, when we're struggling, sometimes we just don't want to talk about it.



Step 4: Be patient.

Check in with your friend regularly to show you care and are present to support.

Even if they say no several times, keep reaching out with ideas:



dropping off some food



suggesting watching a movie



gaming together



an activity that doesn't require talking

It can take a while for people to feel better, regardless of the cause.

Even though it can be challenging, patience is important to forge meaningful bonds and provide effective support.



Keep in mind: They may refuse several times. But really try to understand where they're coming from and remind yourself that there are a lot of reasons they might be refusing.

They may feel...

- they are a burden
- they are not fun to be around
- ashamed or uncomfortable asking for support
- guilty about not being able to support their friends as much while struggling



Step 5: Remember to take care of yourself.

Seek support from others about challenges and worries.

You can also call a crisis line for advice on how to handle the situation and offer support.

Don't try to do therapy.

You're there to listen and offer practical support as needed. Encourage your friend to seek professional support if needed.



What if your friend is having suicidal thoughts or may be at risk of self-harm?

If you are concerned that your friend is a risk to themselves or others, please contact **Canada Suicide Prevention Service** for further guidance. Remember that **not responding, minimizing, or ignoring** what you think may be a **potential risk** to your friend/family member.



View **Suicide Action Montreal**, a suicide helpline that also provides information surrounding help-seeking and suicide prevention.

Potential warning signs:

- stating demeaning remarks
- verbalizing suicidal thoughts (talks or writes about death or suicide)
- demonstrating worrying signs (mood swings, feelings of hopelessness)



FEEDBACK & CONTACT INFORMATION

