

If your friend is not okay...



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

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Getting help for a friend can take a bit of time and effort but it is worth it. As part of being a good and supportive friend, there are times when we will need to check in with our friends, to ensure that they are okay. Good help will assist your friend to deal with their problems and help them get on with life.



ARE YOU OKAY?

If your friend tells you that they're not okay...

1 Listen and try not to judge or “fix things” straight away – taking the time to listen lets them know that you care and that their feelings are important. If someone has been going through a tough time, it can be a big relief to talk about what has been going on. Listening can be helpful, even without taking any actions, it might just be what they need. And don't panic, the fact that your friend sees something is wrong is a really important first step.

2 Let your friend know that they don't have to go through this on their own and that you are there to help and support them.

3 Some people need ‘time’ or ‘space’ before they're willing to accept help.

Just giving them information about where to get help or providing them with fact sheets can be useful.

4 Suggest they read stories at [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au) about other young people who have made it through difficult times; it may help reduce their feelings of being alone and give them hope for the future.

5 Be honest about why you are worried and ask if anyone else knows about how they are feeling.

6 Encourage them to try some self-help strategies. Things like eating well, exercising, writing feelings down, getting enough sleep, doing things they enjoy and avoiding alcohol and other drugs are just a few self-help tips that your friend could try. (Visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au) to download the ‘Tips for a healthy **headspace**’ fact sheet).

7 Don't be too forceful in encouraging self-help activities. It's important to understand that your friend may not feel able to use them because of how they are feeling, or they may not be enough to help them to feel better. If they're interested, you may be able to do some of the strategies with them (e.g. going for a walk, watching their favourite movie).

8 Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult about what is going on and how they are feeling (e.g. a family member, teacher, sports coach).

9 Sometimes, self-help strategies and/or talking to family and friends is not enough and that's okay.

There are a lot of professionals out there who can help. Suggest they make an appointment with their general practitioner (GP) or their nearest **headspace** centre if things don't begin to improve. You could offer to go with them if they need some extra support.

10 Let them know about **eheadspace** if your friend would prefer to seek help online rather than face-to-face. **eheadspace.org.au** provides free online and telephone support (1800 650 890) for young people. Lifeline (13 11 14) and Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) also provide free and confidential support over the phone.



If your friend is not okay...



If your friend doesn't want to get help and you are still worried

Continue to support them in a respectful way. Try not to judge them or become frustrated.

Let their family or another trusted adult know that you are worried. You have to strike the right balance between your friend's right to privacy and the need to make sure they are safe. If you decide to tell someone else, try to let your friend know first that you are planning on doing this.

What not to do or say

Don't tell them to cheer up or get over it – this is not helpful.

Don't encourage them to have a night out involving drugs or alcohol. Substance use may help them cope with their concerns temporarily, but is likely to make things worse.

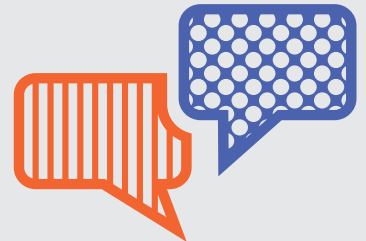
Don't make promises you can't keep – if your friend is at risk of harming themselves or somebody else, you need to seek immediate help, even if they ask you not to.



If you are worried that your friend needs urgent medical help or might hurt themselves or somebody else, you need to tell somebody immediately, even if they have asked you not to. This could be a parent, teacher, their GP, someone from a local health service or by calling 000.

Some things you can say or ask to encourage someone to seek further help

- **Have you talked to anyone else about this?** It's great that you have talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and help from a health worker.
- **Getting help doesn't always mean sitting on a couch with a psychologist or taking medication.** Did you know that GPs can help with this sort of stuff? Find one that bulk bills then all you need is your Medicare card (i.e. you don't have to pay)
- **There are some great websites you can check out to get more information:** headspace.org.au; reachout.com.au; youthbeyondblue.com
- **Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone?** You can log on to ehheadspace.org.au to get online and telephone support from a mental health professional. You can also call Kids Helpline or Lifeline to speak to someone. All of these services are anonymous.
- **I know you're not feeling great now, but with the right help and support, you can get through this.**



Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult. Remember to look after yourself and your needs. Following the 'Tips for a healthy **headspace**' fact sheet may be a good way to look after your own wellbeing to prevent any problems developing. If at any stage you feel overwhelmed you should consider getting some support from a trusted adult (e.g. parent, teacher or GP). You can also contact **headspace** or Kids Helpline.



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For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au