

HOW TO SUPPORT PEOPLE



mindapples
BITESIZE

Be a friend in need, find the right words and be kind and caring to people

KIND MINDS

Though it may not always feel like it, kindness comes naturally to humans. We have evolved to be naturally compassionate, to take care of our young and protect the tribe. In fact it is the key to our survival: we take care of each other, so we can grow smarter and live longer.

Being selfless seems to have selfish benefits. Giving to charity gives us a sense of reward, and being kind seems to be similar in our brains to eating chocolate. Even being "selfish" is complicated: close friends and family seem to become part of our selves; we share their pain.

"Why are you unhappy? Because 99.9% of everything you think, and everything you do, is for yourself – and there isn't one."
WeiWuWei

Caring isn't enough on its own. To support people, you need:

- **Compassion**, empathy, care for others
- **Responsibility** and moral reasoning
- **Self-efficacy**, the belief you can help

BEING SUPPORTIVE

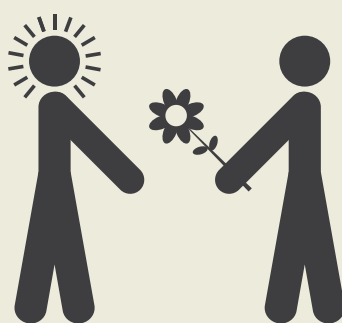


A FEW TIPS FOR GIVING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

There are many ways to be helpful, but one of the most important and underrated is emotional support - being there for someone when they feel upset or overwhelmed.

Acknowledge their feelings

When someone is feeling bad, remember to acknowledge how they feel. If someone is sad, say you can see they're sad. If they're stressed, say the situation sounds stressful. It might not sound like much, but if you skip this step it can leave them feeling unheard and alone. Let them know you've really listened to them.



Share cautiously

You may want to show sympathy by sharing your own perspectives, but try not to compare your experiences to theirs, or take the focus off them. This isn't about you.

Don't pry

Our minds are the most private spaces we have. You may be curious, but don't force people to share. If they don't want to talk, sit with them, or find them a more private place.

Be their friend

When we feel upset, we seek out other people to be with and feel supported. Psychologists call this "tend and befriend". Focus on them as a person, and show them you care and want them to be ok. Sometimes the simple things can make all the difference.

Let them be unhappy

If someone is upset, your instinct may be to cheer them up, or tell them things aren't as bad as they think. Give people space to feel bad before looking for the good, and show them you still want to be with them even when they feel unhappy.

Ask them what they need

They might tell you how you can help them.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR MINDS

We're all different

We all have to find our own individual ways of coping with our problems.

We know our own minds

We do things every day to support ourselves and know what works for us.

Questions, not answers

Answers close down conversations; questions open things up.

Unconditional positive regard

Telling people what to do or criticising without context is bad for their minds.

Minds are private spaces

Our thoughts and feelings are nobody's business but our own.

GOOD INTENTIONS?

Despite our good intentions, sometimes our help doesn't help. Here's what to avoid:

Set expectations: offering support is a commitment, so make sure you can keep it. Set clear boundaries around when and how you can help, and keep your promises.

Manage frustrations: If you can't help, you may get frustrated; after all, you want them to be ok. But try not to get angry, or say things just to make yourself feel better.

Don't overthink it: we sometimes make mistakes because we want to find the "magic words", but the most important part is showing up.

Self-compassion

All this depends on you, so **look after yourself**. Don't burn out or neglect your own wellbeing, or else you might end up letting people down.

You deserve support too, so practice self-compassion, ask for help and support yourself - and remember:

Always fit your own mask before helping others with theirs



Beware advice: you may think you have the answer, but what's right for you isn't right for everyone. A lot of advice is projection, Freud's idea that we push the parts of us we dislike onto others. Giving advice is a great way of talking to yourself.

Tough love? Some people might feel helpless and need a push to take action, but be careful of this. Sometimes people need someone else to show a little faith in them.

Know your limits! You don't need to become an amateur psychotherapist. Sometimes the best way to support someone is to help them find the right help.

This free tip sheet was created by Mindapples to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out more about our apps, e-learning, webinars, face-to-face training and charitable work, visit www.mindapples.org.