

# Supporting a 4-H Member in Distress

FOR LEADERS



As a 4-H leader, you are a role model and ally that 4-H members can trust and go to for support.

Young people face many challenges today. With social media and the access to technology 24 hours a day, bullying and peer pressure can be hard to avoid. Social media can also influence self-esteem and confidence as young people see image standards that are not always healthy.

This is a time where youth are faced with a lot of changes and unknowns while at the same time discovering themselves and finding their sense of identity.

One of the best things you can do with your members is to have honest and open conversations. By using this approach, you are showing your members compassion and understanding, especially when they come to you in distress.



## Here is a list of ways you can help a 4-H member if they come to you in distress:

- ✓ **Listen!** Make an effort to really listen to your members without judging. Show that you understand and if you don't, ask for clarification.
- ✓ **Communicate!** Encourage your members to be open about the good and bad issues in their lives, and be open to different forms of communication.
- ✓ **Provide hope!** Offer words of positivity and encouragement that things will get better. It can be difficult to open up, so thank them for sharing with you.

- ✓ **Expand your mental health knowledge!** If you don't know a lot about mental health, emotional health and mental disorders, take some time to learn about it. Check out reliable online resources like KidsHelpPhone.ca or talk to a doctor or mental health professional, and share what you learn with your members.
- ✓ **Encourage your members to reach out to Kids Help Phone or another mental health professional!** Places like Kids Help Phone offer support from trained mental health counsellors anonymously, which may encourage some of your members to feel like they can reach out safely.
- ✓ **Contact emergency services!** If you feel like a member is in immediate danger, call 911! Stay with them until emergency services have arrived, if it is safe to do so.
- ✓ **Reflect on your own personal views of mental health!** In order to positively support your members, check your views and biases on mental health. You can do this by paying attention to how you react when you see or hear stories of mental health or how you talk about mental health.

When supporting a member in distress, remember to take care of yourself. Your mental health is important too and you may be going through an array of emotions and feelings. Seek support by reaching out to a friend or family member or seek professional support, but always keep in mind the confidentiality of your member.

### Remember:

- ✓ **You are not responsible** for your 4-H member's wellness and you are not a mental health professional.
- ✓ **There is a limit** to what you can do even as an adult.
- ✓ **You shouldn't blame yourself** for your member's struggle. The best you can do is be there for them and support them as much as you can.

### For more information on having open conversations with your 4-H members

Read Kids Help Phone's article

*How to have an open conversation with a young person at*

**[kidshelpphone.ca/get-involved/programs-resources/open-conversation-young-person](https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-involved/programs-resources/open-conversation-young-person)**

**Kids Help Phone** 

4-H Canada has partnered with Kids Help Phone to develop this resource  
KidsHelpPhone.ca



[4-h-canada.ca/healthyliving](https://4-h-canada.ca/healthyliving)