

Supporting a Friend in Distress

FOR MEMBERS



A friend or fellow 4-H member may open up to you about what is going on in their life and you may not know how to help them. This tip sheet will help you, as well as help them.

First, ask yourself two questions:

1. Is it safe to help?
2. Do you feel comfortable and able to help?

If you answered **NO** to either of these questions, **seek the help of a trusted adult right away or if the person is in immediate danger, call 911.**

It is an emergency if your friend has said they are planning to hurt themselves or someone else and will not seek help on their own. If it is safe to do so, you can wait with them until help arrives.

If you answered **YES** to both questions, here are some ways you can offer support:

- ✓ **Listen!** This is one of the most important things you can do to show your friend that you care. The key to listening is allowing them to talk without being interrupted or judged.
- ✓ **Be there!** Spend time together and do things you both enjoy.
- ✓ **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 what they are going through.
- ✓ **Make a list of activities they can turn to when going through a struggle!** Activities could include journaling, music, running, reading or volunteering to name a few.



- ✓ **Check out KidsHelpPhone.ca together!** By visiting the website together, your friend may feel encouraged to check it out later on their own.
- ✓ **Involve a trusted adult!** Identify a parent, teacher or leader that your friend can reach out to, and who could help them find resources or get professional help.
- ✓ **Follow-up!** Reach out to your friend. If someone doesn't seem like themselves, ask them how they are doing and remind them they are not alone.

After you have helped a friend in distress, remember to take care of yourself. It can be difficult helping a friend and it is normal to feel worried, scared, or sad. Seek support such as Kids Help Phone or talk to a trusted adult.

Remember:

- ✓ You are not responsible for your friend's wellness. They may need more support than you can give.
- ✓ It's okay to set boundaries for yourself. If you find you aren't able to have a difficult conversation, suggest your friend seek out another member of their support circle.
- ✓ Don't blame yourself for your friend's struggle. All you can do is be there for them.

Confidentiality... to tell or not to tell

If a friend has asked you not to tell anyone about what they are going through, remember some secrets are just too big to keep. If you feel like their safety or well-being may be compromised, talk to a trusted adult who can help you and them find the resources or help they need.

It can be a tough decision to make, but your friend's life and safety are most important.



Kids Help Phone 

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



4-h-canada.ca/healthyliving