YOU (and/or) YOUR FRIEND ARE GOING THROUGH A TOUGH TIME

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOURSELF OR YOUR FRIEND

When you or a friend are going through something difficult, it can be confusing—both for those going through the difficult time and for those who care about them and are trying to help support them.

It can feel awkward, scary, uncomfortable, confusing, and surreal. Just as you might not know what to do or say, people who are grieving often aren’t sure what they need.

WHERE TO START

The person going through the difficult time doesn’t need fixing. They are not broken; just going through something extremely stressful.

What the person experiencing stress needs most are for their supports (friends, family, trusted adults) to show up, stick around, act normal, and listen. One of the best things you can do is to continue your normal routine with your friend. Sounds easy right? It can be, and sometimes even people with the best intentions, avoid the person who is going through something because they don’t know what to do or say.

Try to not take it personally if a friend who is going through a tough time:

* Becomes quiet
* Stays to themselves
* Make you feel as though they are pushing you away

Difficult times and extreme stress can make people uncomfortable, so there’s a good chance the person going through the difficulties is having to deal with other people’s feelings about their feelings. You can make a difference by being the person who listens without making it about your own feelings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING UP - AND ACTING NORMAL

Kids, teens, and young adults say they appreciated the friends who continued to text, call, and just hang out with them. They might say no (because stress takes a LOT of energy), but don’t take it personally. They want to be there for you too, but it might look different for a while. You can also give your friend a free pass to say no or to not even respond.

“Hey- no need to reply. Just wanted to send you this funny video and let you know I’m here.”

“It’s okay to say no, but Jayden and I are going to a movie on Friday, want to go with us?”
CHECKING IN

The question, “How are you?” can be hard to answer for someone going through hard times.

If you want to ask your friend how they are, be SURE you have the time and energy to listen to the real answer.

Reaching out to your friend helps them feel less alone, so here are some other ways to ask how they’re doing that might be a little easier for them to answer.

- How are you in this moment?
- What would be most helpful from me right now?

HOW TO LISTEN, LIKE REALLY, REALLY LISTEN

- Give them your undivided attention. Put away any distractions like phones, laptops, games etc.
- Go light on the questions. Let them talk.
- Hold off on giving advice or suggestions.
- Be okay with silence.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You’ve already got show up, listen, and act normal on the list of ways to be helpful. But what else can you do? When someone is going through hard times it can leave people feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Helping with specific tasks on your friend’s to do list means less work for them and a chance to spend time together.

Potential ideas

- Help them study or work on a project. Stress can make concentrating extra tough.
- Bring them their favorite snack.
- Invite them for a sleepover/sleep over at their house.
- Organize a game or movie night for them and a few close friends.

What are some activities you can think of to do with your friend or yourself if you are going through a tough time?

* ____________________________________________________________________
* ____________________________________________________________________
* ____________________________________________________________________