

HELPSEEKER #4

HELPING FRIENDS

Getting Help for a Friend

If your friend wants to get some help for a mental health problem, it is important to know that there are many different types of help available and they do work. Getting help can take a bit of time and effort but it is worth it – good help will assist your friend to deal with their problems and get back to their normal life.

To find help for your friend you need to work out what kind of support they need. Some of the main types of help are listed below – you may need to try more than one as everyone is different and what works for one person may not work for another.

Talking to people close by: friends or family

The advantage of talking to friends and family is that they usually know and care for your friend and are close by. The disadvantages are that they may be too involved to help, or don't know how to give the help needed.

Asking these sorts of questions may help your friend decide whether to talk to a friend or family member.

- Does your friend trust and feel respected by that person?
- Will they put them down or judge them?
- Will they tell someone else about the problem even if asked not to?
- Do they need experience with your friends' concerns?
- Is it better to talk to someone outside the situation, who is not involved?

Talking to someone outside the situation

Many people like to talk with someone outside the situation such as a teacher, or coun-

sellor as they can offer a different perspective. Trained counsellors can help people to work through problems and may be able to arrange other support.

It is important to have someone who your friend feels comfortable to talk with freely. Some things you might want to consider include whether your friend feels more comfortable talking to a male or female; if they would like a youth service; and whether the service is easy to get to.

Getting information and finding what services are around

There are a lot of services that can help you and your friend. If you are unsure where to go you might want to:

- Ask teachers, school counsellors, family members, or family friends
- Contact your local council, ask what youth services are in your local area
- See the back of this sheet for lists of services and useful websites

The next step is to contact the service to make an appointment. Often it's worth asking if they have a "drop in" where you don't need to make an appointment. Remember you can ring anonymously and still get the information.

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Contacting a service

When you contact a service the first person you talk to will probably be an intake or duty worker who will ask a range of questions to find out more about your friends' situation. You can also ask as many questions as you want to find out what kind of help they can offer.

If you want to you can go along with your friend for the first appointment to give your support and make it less intimidating for your friend. Most services understand that young people have a right to confidentiality, that is to keep the details of their visit private. If your friend is worried about this, ask the service to explain to your friend his or her rights, and ask whether anyone will be told about the appointment.

Remember if it doesn't work out, that's OK. It doesn't mean that you have failed your friend

in any way. It just means that you need to try something new. There are heaps of services out there to help – your friend just needs to find the one that is right for them.

If your friend doesn't want to talk to anyone

If you are worried about a friend but they don't want to get help it can be very difficult. You can help them just by being a good friend – listening to them and being there for them.

If you are concerned that they might hurt themselves or somebody else you need to tell somebody immediately, even if your friend has asked you not to. This could be a teacher, parent or someone from a local service. And remember to look after yourself too – it can be very stressful to help a friend, so make sure that you are looking after your own needs as well.

List of Useful Services

Kids Help Line

1800 55 1800

Trained counsellors available 24 hours.

Lifeline

13 11 14

General counselling, 24 hours.

Ybblue

www.ybblue.com.au

Information on depression for young people and their families

SANE

www.sane.org

Info about mental illness including fact sheets, links and an online helpline.

Reachout

www.reachout.com.au

Info about health, mental health, drugs, helping friends and much more. Includes a service finder to find services close to you.



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Youth Health

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