

ASKING FOR A FRIEND

When someone you care about may be struggling

When someone you care about is having a hard time, it's important to trust your instincts and reach out. Below are suggestions and resources to help start the conversation, offer support, and look out for yourself in the process.

SIGNS THAT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT IS STRUGGLING

Consider changes in behavior, mood, and mindset

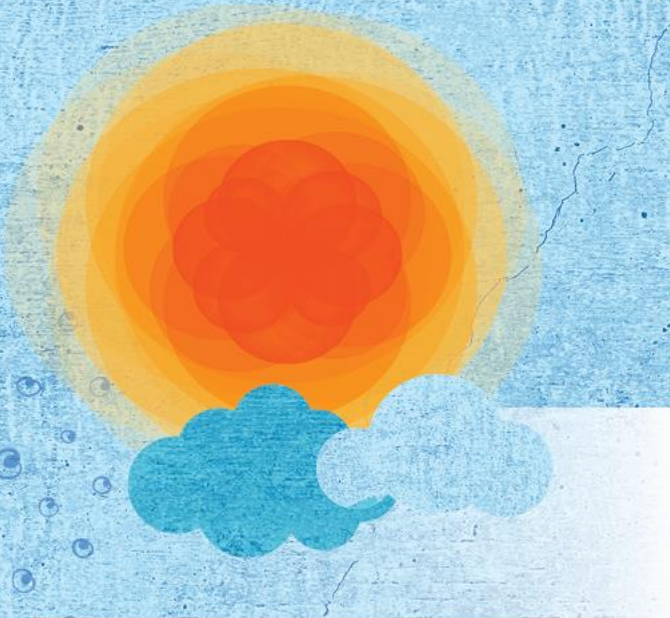
They seem distant: If a friend is withdrawing from activities they usually enjoy, calling in sick to work, not returning calls or avoiding social gatherings, it's a good time to check in.

Their habits have changed: Not getting enough sleep or staying in bed more than usual can be warning signs. Likewise, eating more or less than normal can indicate that someone is having a hard time and may need support.

They're not themselves: Extreme changes in mood or behavior—*excessive worry*, paranoia, increased agitation, irritation and anger—are warning signs that *you* shouldn't ignore.

They're negative or act hopeless: Even when a friend is hesitant to share what's going on inside, they may express increased negativity in casual conversation or comments online. Don't ignore these potential cues that they're *having a hard time*.

They're taking more risks: When a friend is using drugs or alcohol to cope, harming themselves or disregarding their personal safety and well-being, it's time to take action.



HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

Be relaxed and nonjudgmental:

Acknowledging a friend's concerning behavior can make them defensive and push you away. Instead of, "Why don't you show up to game night anymore?" try, "I feel like we haven't seen each other in forever, can we meet for lunch or a walk?" It can also help to find a relaxed time and place that puts you both at ease.

Be the first to open up: If someone isn't receptive to meeting up or sharing their thoughts, your honesty and openness can help lower their defenses. Try an approach like, "Things feel really overwhelming lately, I could use one of our talks. Can we make time this week?"

Don't give up: No matter how understanding and careful your approach, your friend may not be ready to have the conversation or accept support. Remember that mental health struggles can impact the way people perceive situations or view themselves. If concerns continue or escalate, you might enlist the help of other friends, family members, faculty or trusted coworkers.

HOW TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

If friends open up but are embarrassed or anxious to reach out for help on their own, offer to navigate the process with them. This might include researching options online and finding providers who take their insurance. You may also offer to go with them to an appointment or touch base afterward.

Taking on the burden of a friend in emotional distress can be overwhelming. It's important to recognize your limits, set boundaries and reach out for help if you need it.

Please be reminded that the Employee Assistance Program, **CCA@YourService**, offers you and your family free, confidential, 24/7 access to professional counseling for any issue that's on your mind, as well as provider location and referrals for everyday needs, including support groups, volunteer opportunities, health and wellness practitioners, and more.

PHONE: 800-833-8707

WEB: www.myccaonline.com
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