

# Supporting Friends/Family with a Mental Health Condition

SETH SHOWALTER

# Objectives

Describe signs and symptoms of someone who may be struggling

Demonstrate things to say and things not to say

Ask questions to inquire how someone is doing

Describe ways to approach someone you are concerned about

Demonstrate ways of providing emotional support

Describe ways of supporting someone in seeking help

Demonstrate way of taking care of oneself

# Why Are You Here?

There is no one size fits all way to support

About 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems each year

It can be heart wrenching to see a loved one struggling

The person you care for may have a very challenging and complex behavior, which can be successful

# Signs To Look Out For

Withdrawal/isolation

Loss of energy

Overly emotional or lack of emotion for no apparent reason

Loss of interest in things they used to enjoy

Changes in appetite

Changes in sleep hygiene

Sudden changed in emotions

Self-harm behaviors

Suicidal/homicidal

# How to Approach the Person

Express your concern

Talk in a space that is free of distraction

Speak in a relaxed, calm manner

Be respectful, compassionate and empathetic

Listen and make eye contact

Ask appropriate questions

Give them the opportunity to open up

Share insights to encourage conversation

Share feelings, but don't be defensive

## If concerned, questions you could ask:

I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing?

What can I do to help you to talk about these issue?

What else can I help you with?

I am someone who cares and wants to listen.

Who or what has helped you deal with similar issues in the past?

Do you know of others who have experienced these types of problems who you can talk with?

How can I help you to find help?

How can I help you find more information about mental health problems?

I'm concerned about your safety.

# Things You Can Say:

Do you want to talk about it? I'm always here for you.

What can I do to help?

That sounds really difficult.

Let's go somewhere quiet or take a walk.

I'm really sorry you're going through this."

"Are you looking for my perspective or would you rather I listen?"

# Things to Avoid Saying:

Just pray about it.

You just need to change your attitude.

Stop harping on the negative, you should just start living.

Everyone feels that way sometimes.

You have the same illness as my (whomever).

Yes, we all feel a little crazy now and then.



# Things to Avoid Doing

Criticizing, blaming, or raising your voice at them

Talking too much, too rapidly, or too loudly

Showing hostility

Assuming things about them or their situation

Being sarcastic or making jokes about their condition

Patronizing them or saying anything condescending

# Communication Tips/Strategies

Communicate in a straightforward manner

Speak at an appropriate age and developmental level

Pay attention to their reactions during the discussion

Sometimes it is helpful to make a comparison to physical illness

# Ways of Offering Support

Express your concern or support

Remind them of help that is available

Ask questions, listen, and be responsive

Reassure them

Offer help with daily tasks

Help with medications, appointments and treatments

Support a healthy lifestyle

Know when something is wrong or right

Check-in regularly

# Crisis Situations

If they have harmed themselves and need medical attention

If they have suicidal feelings and may act on them

If they put themselves or someone else at immediate, serious risk of harm

# How to Support Someone Who is Suicidal

Ask: “Are you having thoughts of wanting to kill yourself?”

Ask then how they are feeling and really listen

Take note of any plans they might have

Be understanding of their situation

Help them focus on the positive

Make a plan of how they can keep safe

Get urgent help if they need it

# If You Need to Contact 911

## **If they are unable to remain safe :**

Stay with them and help them call 911 for an ambulance, if you feel able to do so.

Request an officer that's trained in Crisis Intervention (CIT).

Provide as much information as possible to the dispatcher

If you're fearful that the individual may purposefully provoke an officer into firing their weapon, repeat this to the dispatcher multiple times

# Why Might the Person Not Want Help?

They don't think they need help

They don't think treatment will work

They don't understand they are unwell

They are scared of doctor's response

They are worried about other's opinions

They are worried it will affect their job

They feel hopeless

They fear past experiences

# Things to Try if They Don't Want Help

Talk to them about how they feel

Ask them why they don't want to get help

Express your feelings of concern for them

Discuss options and the kind of help they can get

Offer to help them talk to their doctor



# Taking Care of You

Sensory

Pleasure

Mental/Mastery

Spiritual Emotional

Physical

Social

# Why Your Support Matters

When you are committed to showing up for the people you care about, you are intentional about reaching out to them without them having to take the first step or to ask for help. It's about putting yourself in their shoes and imagining what you would want if you were in a similar situation.

But more importantly, it's about asking them how you can help, because what they may want or need may be completely different than what you might imagine. Not only does helping others and being there for them benefit your soul, it also builds a community that cares about each other and takes care of one another.

***WHAT YOU DO MATTERS!***

# Your Employee Assistance Program

**Call toll-free or visit us on the web**

**24 hours a day/7 days a week**

**Thank you!**

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