



You Can Help a Friend Facilitator Conversation Guide

Overview: This workshop teaches students how to recognize and respond to signs of distress in peers. Facilitators may include health professionals, staff who work with students, and staff who are familiar with mental health topics.

Before you Begin:

- Download and install Adobe Reader (get.adobe.com/reader/) and Source Sans Pro (fonts.google.com/specimen/Source+Sans+Pro). Check that the PowerPoint font matches the editable PDF. In the event of technical issues, use the editable PDF version of this presentation.
- Update slide 21 with campus resources and information.
- Test video links and audio.

Key Messages:

- It's important to know how to help your friends.
- Students are in a unique position to help each other.
- You know when to see a doctor about a health concern, whether through a thought process or intuition. The same thought process and intuition can be applied when deciding when to get help for mental health.
- You don't need to know what the problem is to know that someone needs help.
- When determining if a friend is in distress, trust your instincts.
- Stay aware of signs of suicide, and speak up if you see them.
- Having a conversation may be difficult, but is worth it.
- You can start reaching out and helping your friends today.



Slide	Suggested script and actions <i>(italicized text indicates suggested script)</i>
1	<p><i>Welcome! Thank you for being here today. My name is _____ and I am _____</i> [offer information about your profession, background, or why you’re facilitating this workshop].</p>
2	<p>Section 1: To Start Things Off</p> <p>Key Message: It’s important to know how to help your friends. Suggested time: 5 minutes</p>
3	<p><i>Today we’re going to talk about:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How to identify when a friend or peer needs help</i> • <i>What you can do to offer help and support, and how to do it</i> • <i>And, where to go for more resources when outside support is needed</i> <p><i>Issues related to mental health, like these, may be challenging or disturbing to talk about. You don’t need to say anything here if you aren’t comfortable. There will also be counselors available after this session to discuss any concerns you might have.</i></p>
4	<p>Icebreaker: Ask students to discuss some of the ways they help their friends. For small groups, ask participants to share with the group. For large groups, ask students to pair up and share with their partners.</p> <p>Use any or all of the following prompts to encourage discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some ways you help your friends on a daily basis? • What are some big ways you’ve helped your friends in the past? • What are some ways you help each other on campus?
5	<p>Section 2: What’s Happening on Campus?</p> <p>Key Message: Students are in a unique position to help each other. Suggested time: 10 minutes</p>
6	<p><i>Stress and distress on college campuses is common and widespread. Of undergraduates surveyed in the past year, 62% had experienced overwhelming anxiety and 40% had experienced depression.</i></p>

<p>7-8</p>	<p><i>Stress, anxiety, and depression also frequently affect academic performance and health and safety.</i></p> <p>Choose two or more statistics to discuss with the group that highlight the prevalence of distress, how it can affect academics, and how it can affect health and safety. Use the following prompts to encourage discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this information surprise you? • Does anybody want to share reactions?
<p>9</p>	<p><i>What does the word “distress” mean to you?</i></p> <p><i>Distress can be experienced by anyone and in many forms. Most everyone will experience some kind of distress at some point. Distress is not always caused by a mental illness and can sometimes be the result of life circumstance.</i></p> <p><i>Regardless of severity, distress is always worthy of receiving help and care, although not necessarily professional care.</i></p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Play the embedded video, “To My Brothers.” Then, encourage discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn from this? • How did you feel watching this video? What do you think is the main message? • Why is it important to lean on one another?
<p>11</p>	<p><i>70% of students say that when they need help, they turn to a friend first. What does that tell you about the important role you can play in helping a friend?</i></p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Section 3: Getting Help: It’s Okay to Not Be Great</p> <p>Key Messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You know when to see a doctor about a health concern, whether through a thought process or intuition. The same thought process and intuition can be applied when deciding when to get help for mental health. • You don’t need to know what the problem is to know that someone needs help. <p>Suggested time: 10 minutes</p>
<p>13</p>	<p><i>Asking for help for yourself or someone else is the brave choice. If you are concerned, take action. It can make a world of difference.</i></p>

14	<p>Discussion: Help students understand how to tell when it's time to get help for mental health by comparing it to deciding when to get medical care. You can use the following questions as prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the last time you had a stomachache. Did you go to the doctor? Why or why not? • What would have led you to go to a doctor or emergency room?
15	<p><i>You can tell that it's time to get help for yourself or someone else if harmful or distressing thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in yourself or someone else:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Become too intense to handle</i> • <i>Last too long</i> • <i>Don't get better or get worse</i> • <i>Interfere with normal function or day-to-day behaviors</i> • <i>Are associated with other problems such as poor sleep, changes in appetite, lack of concentration, or withdrawal from daily activities</i> • <i>Or become dangerous to anyone</i> <p><i>Remember, asking for help is sensible and courageous. Trust your instincts. If you feel that something is wrong, you are probably right.</i></p>
16	<p>Activity: Let students read the text message conversations. Ask them, <i>What signs can you see that Alex and/or Gabriel need help?</i></p> <p>If needed, review slide 15 with students and ask them to find specific examples in the chats that show that Alex and Gabriel's situations are (1) too intense (2) lasting too long (3) not getting better (4) interfering with normal functioning (5) associated with other problems and/or (6) becoming dangerous.</p> <p>Ask students, <i>If this were your friend, at what point would you want them to get help?</i></p> <p>You can also ask students to recall if any of their own recent text conversations were concerning or didn't sit well with them. Invite them to revisit these conversations after they've had a chance to think about this activity.</p>
17	<p><i>It is important to trust your gut if you feel that someone needs help. You don't need to be an expert or a medical professional to know that something is wrong. You are already an expert on your friends. You don't need to know exactly what the problem is to recognize that someone needs help.</i></p>
18	<p>Section 4: You Can Tell When Something is Wrong</p> <p>Key Message: When determining if a friend is in distress, trust your instincts. Suggested time: 10 minutes</p>

<p>19</p>	<p>Sometimes it may be evident that someone you know is in distress and may need help. Sometimes you may have to look closer at their behaviors or the thoughts and feelings they express. It is really valuable to note changes in your friends.</p> <p>Some of the signs that a friend may need help are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden or drastic changes in their appearance • Frequent or sudden mood changes, mood swings, or acting like a different person • Changes in behavior or in the way they communicate, such as different speech patterns or changes in the rhythm or frequency of communication • Changes in friendships or relationships that may be difficult to explain or seem dangerous • Loss of interest in academics, dropping grades, and not caring about school
<p>20</p>	<p>Activity: Ask students to examine the posts in Ashley’s Instagram feed. Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you see that might signal a problem? • What thoughts, feelings, or behaviors can you perceive that might indicate distress? • What would you do if this were your friend? <p>You can also invite them to think about posts they’ve seen on their own social media accounts and the behavior patterns of people they care about who are active on social media.</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>Here are some places to go and organizations to contact if you or a friend needs help. Take a picture of this slide so that you have this information available when you need it. Or, write down this information and keep it somewhere you can reach it.</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>Section 5: Being There: When a Friend is at Risk of Suicide</p> <p>Key Message: Stay aware of signs of suicide, and speak up if you see them. Suggested time: 5 minutes</p>
<p>23</p>	<p>Ask students, <i>Has a friend of yours ever talked about wanting to end his or her life? What was that like for you?</i></p> <p><i>Suicide can seem sudden and unexpected, but most people who attempt suicide talk about it first and usually with a friend. Some of the signs that a friend may be thinking about or intending suicide are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about wanting to end it all • Giving away their possessions and belongings • Expressing feelings of guilt, hopelessness, or desperation • Withdrawal from or lack of interest in everyday life or activities they used to enjoy • Feelings of intense anger • Asking about or looking for ways to access deadly means such as firearms, rope, dangerous chemicals, or harmful drugs • Posting goodbye messages online

<p>24-25</p>	<p><i>If you sense that a friend is having suicidal thoughts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Take it seriously: 50-75% of people who attempt suicide talk about it first, and usually with a friend</i> • <i>Stay as calm as you can and get the information you need from them to know how to respond</i> • <i>Never put yourself in harm's way. It's important to help someone who needs you, but it's just as important to protect your safety.</i> • <i>Connect them to help by reaching out to campus resources, a healthcare professional, or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Hotline or texting the Crisis Text Line</i> • <i>Take a picture of slide 25, or write down this information and keep it where you can reach it</i> • <i>In the event of an emergency, such as someone trying to hurt themselves or others, now or soon, always call 911</i>
<p>26</p>	<p>Section 6: How to Have the Conversation</p> <p>Key Message: Having a conversation may be difficult, but is worth it.</p>
<p>27</p>	<p>Play the embedded video: "Seize the Awkward."</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>Discussion: Ask students to think back to a difficult or challenging conversation they've had, then ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What made this conversation difficult?</i> • <i>What made it worth it?</i> <p>For small groups, encourage students to share their answers with the group. For larger groups, pair or group students and ask them to share among themselves.</p>
<p>29</p>	<p><i>Starting a conversation like this can be intimidating, but learning how to have these conversations is important and practicing can make it easier. Here are a few tips for how to begin:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Start by explaining why you are concerned. Use specific examples, such as "You've been staying in bed a lot lately," or "You've been missing class."</i> • <i>Be compassionate and show empathy. Let your friend know that you're trying to help.</i> • <i>Listen to what they have to say, and everything they say. Let them finish their thoughts.</i> • <i>Know your limits. You are not expected to solve someone else's problem, but you can connect them to help and be a friend.</i> • <i>Challenges you didn't expect may arise, and that's okay. It doesn't mean you did anything wrong. Showing that you care and support a friend almost never makes things worse.</i>

<p>30</p>	<p>Activity: Ask students to choose a partner, or group students in pairs or groups of three. Ask them to role play a conversation with Alex or Gabriel from slide 16 by completing the statement, “I’m worried about you because...” Students can also role play having conversations with their own friends.</p> <p>Remind students that this prompt will help them begin the conversation with examples. They don’t always need to use these exact words, but it’s important to lead with examples.</p> <p>Encourage discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel when beginning the conversation? • How did your partner react? • What went well? What could have gone better? • What did you learn from this Activity that you can use in real life?
<p>31</p>	<p><i>Sometimes you may try to help a friend who doesn’t want to listen. This friend may:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Believe that they don’t have a problem or that facing it will make it worse</i> • <i>Be worried about possible consequences</i> • <i>Feel judged or threatened by your concern</i> • <i>Or, they may not be ready to talk to you or talk at that specific time</i>
<p>32</p>	<p><i>If your friend isn’t ready to talk, ask if you can talk about it at a different time or suggest someone else they can talk to such as a mental health professional or a campus support resource. Whatever happens, it’s important to keep communicating with your friend. Make sure that you are able to reach them, and that they are able to reach you.</i></p> <p><i>And, follow up and keep trying. It may be what your friend needs to know that you really care, and to open up enough to ask for help. Keep in mind that when you have a friend’s best interests at heart, you’re not betraying them or their trust by showing concern or asking for help. You’re watching out for them, which is what friends do.</i></p> <p>If you ever feel that there might be potential for harm to self or others, contact campus emergency services or call 911.</p>
<p>33</p>	<p>Section 7: Help a Friend Today</p> <p>Key Message: You can start reaching out and helping your friends today. Suggested time: 5 minutes</p>

34-35

So, help a friend today. Reach out. Start the conversation. And, trust yourself. If your gut is telling you that a friend needs help, it's probably true. Stay aware and observant, and spread the word about what you learned here today by sharing these resources.

Ask students to text the pictures they took of slides 21 and 25 to a friend or share them on social media. You can recommend using the hashtag #goodtoknow.

Remember, you have the power to make a difference in a friend's life. Be sure to visit jedfoundation.org/help for more info. And thanks for being here today!

All statistics included in this presentation are taken from the American College Health Association. *American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Data Report Spring 2017*. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association; 2017.

