

Peer In Crisis: A Step By Step Guide



PRESENTED BY: SKULE™ MENTAL
WELLNESS



What can you do when a friend or peer confides in you about problems regarding their mental health?

The two most important things you can do are listen and help them connect with mental health services.

When having this conversation with your peer, here are some important things to keep in mind:



Choose a suitable place and time

- It would be best to find a somewhat private area as talking about one's concerns in mental health is a personal, private, and often sensitive matter



Let them take as much time as they need

- Don't rush them. Give them time to collect their thoughts. Be patient and don't force them to share details they are not ready to share



Listen actively and without judgement

- Actually pay attention and reflect on what they're sharing with you. Ask specific questions to help clarify anything that is unclear. Summarize what they say at the end to show that you were truly listening and are concerned for them.



Avoid giving advice

- Focus on listening to their feelings rather than trying to give them short-term solution advice. Often, understanding how they feel is more valuable than being told advice



Do NOT promise to keep secrets

- If a peer is confiding in you, that probably means they trust you with their feelings. Therefore, you should not promise to keep secrets since you won't be able to keep them especially when you know they'll need more help.



Instill a sense of hope

- Let them know that things will get better and that they have the support of friends, family, you, counsellors etc.
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Afterwards, you can help by referring them to mental health resources and services. How and to who you can refer them to will depend on the context, your relationship with them, and their willingness to engage in further help-seeking.

However some general guidelines are:

- **Appreciate their asking for help and validate their feelings**
 - It takes courage to share these personal matters to someone so let them know that you're glad that they're reaching out and willing to seek help
- **Acknowledge your limitations**
 - There's only so much you know about mental health and often it is better to seek expert advice
- **Sharing resource options and let them know what to expect**
 - Familiarize yourself with on and off-campus resources or at least refer them to a place to start searching for resources. Some resources are: Gerstein Centre, U of T Health & Wellness, Good2Talk, Stella's Place and many more.
- **Follow up and offer further referrals**
 - Check in with them once in a while to see how they're doing and refer them to other resources if needed



It can get overwhelming
trying to take care of
your peers.

However, it is
important to always
take care of yourself
first.

The following are some signs that you may be feeling overwhelmed.

- **Feeling guilty and frustrated** when seeing your peer unhappy
- **Impatient** because the situation doesn't change fast or consistently enough
- **Sadness, distress or anger** that this is happening
- **Sadness or grief** because you want to go back to the way things used to be
- **Fear or concern** that this could happen to other peers and even yourself
- **Resentment**, because you feel peers illness is taking up all your time and attention

Remember if you feel this way, it does not mean you are a bad person or you don't care.

You may be feeling compassion fatigue, which includes:

- **difficulty asking for help**
- **a strong and even unrealistic need to make everything ideal for your peer**
- **difficulty saying "no"**
- **neglecting yourself and your needs for the benefit of your peers**
- **believing that you are the only person that can care for or help your peer**



Ways to Take Care of Yourself:

Balance

- Try to balance out the time you give to your peer and the time you have for yourself, Leave some time out for you to enjoy yourself doing the things that you love.

Set Boundaries

- Communicate with your peers what your limits are and establishing what is and is not acceptable

Differentiate Between Support and Rescue

- Try to remember that you can't "fix" your peer, their mental health is beyond your control.
- Be there for them, listen to them and let them know that you care about them.
- Help them get access to other supports and resources.

Remember Your Own Needs

- You may end up not attending to your needs because you may feel as if your peer requires more time than yourself.
- Set those boundaries and take care of your own mental health by taking time for yourself to de-stress.

Remember You Are Not Alone

- It can get overwhelming to support a peer.
- You can always reach out to talk to anyone about advice and ways to support your peer.
- If your peer refuses to get professional help, you can still go to a professional for advice on how to support someone going through hard times.



Resources & Information

Helplines

- **Good2Talk:** 1-866-925-5454
- **Trevor Project – LGBTQ Suicide Helpline:**
1-866-488-7386
- **Connex Ontario – Mental Health Helpline:**
1-866-531-2600
- **Canada Suicide Prevention**
Service Text: 1-833-456-4566 Or Text 45645
Gerstein Crisis Centre: 416-929-5200

Walk Ins

- **Stella's Place** (18 Camden St, Toronto)
- **Griffin Centre** (1126 Finch Ave W, North York)
- **Sylark Youth** (Multiple Locations)

Websites

- **IAR Training:** <https://iar.utoronto.ca/>
- **U of T Health & Wellness:**
<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>
- **Skule Mental Wellness Website:**
<http://wellness.skule.ca/>
- **LinkMental Health (Find a Therapist)**
<https://www.linkmentalhealth.com/>

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