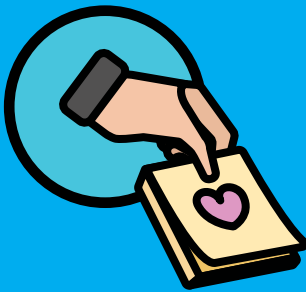


How to Respond if There Are Signs of Distress



Speaking up and reaching out can make a huge difference in someone getting support.

Things to Say:

Say you've noticed changes. Bring up concrete things you've seen. Show care and concern, in a calm tone of voice.

- "I've noticed you haven't been coming to class."
- "You seem really sad lately."
- "I care about you and I'm worried about what I've seen."

Listen and Don't Judge

Everyone's experiences are valid. They really need to feel heard.

Ask Questions:

- "Tell me more about that."
- "How are you feeling lately?"
- "What's been on your mind?"

Reflect what they're saying. Validate their feelings by saying things like:

- "That sounds really hard."
- "I can hear how hopeless you're feeling."

Ask what they need right now, and how they can be supported. Don't be afraid to ask the hard questions, like:

- "Are you thinking of hurting yourself?"
- "Are you thinking of ending your life?"
- "Do you have a plan?"

Connect Them to Help

This is the most important part!

Share with them that there are people they can talk to who can help (school counsellor, family doctor, helpline, etc.), and that they don't have to go through this alone. Offer to go with them, or sit with them while they call a helpline; it can be a scary step to take, especially for the first time.

Important: If they express extreme hopelessness or suicidal thoughts (or are suddenly very calm - even happy - after a long period of intense distress):

- Stay with them as they shouldn't be left alone! This is quite possibly a crisis.
- They need to be connected with a crisis counsellor. Call 911 or take them to the Emergency Room if you're worried that they need urgent support.

Looking for Support Services?

Check out Kids Help Phone's "Resources Around Me" tool:

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/resourcesaroundme/welcome.html>