

## Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/news/Page9966.aspx>

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## Supporting a friend with mental health issues

Do you have a friend who just doesn't seem to be their usual self? Something about them has changed, and you're wondering what's going on?

Friends can be the first ones to notice changes in a friend. It may be a change in mood, certain behaviours, or in activities they used to enjoy. You may notice that your friend seems to be tired all the time or is easily annoyed. Maybe they've stopped hanging out and are spending more time alone. Sometimes it's hard to pinpoint what's different about them, but you just have a sense that something's wrong. Maybe they've told you that they're having struggles.

Many people turn to their friends for help if they're having a problem. Knowing how to support someone is an important part of being a friend.

### Signs a friend may need some support:

- They don't seem to enjoy activities as much anymore.
- They seem distracted or are having trouble staying focused.
- They are unusually worried about things that don't seem to be a big deal to you or others.
- Their eating habits have changed—they avoid hanging out at lunchtime or make excuses as to why they're not eating.
- They're always tired or complain they aren't sleeping well.
- They're missing more and more time from school or work.

- They're drinking more alcohol or using other drugs more.
- They're sad much of the time and find it hard to see any positives in their life.
- They are spending more time alone—they don't want to hang out with friends or do any of their usual activities.

If you've noticed changes in a friend that have been going on for a while or seem to be getting worse, it's time to do something. Speak up! Start by sharing with your friend what you have noticed and why it concerns you. Have this conversation in a comfortable but private place, where the two of you can talk without being interrupted. Let them know that you care about them and you're worried about them.

- **Build confidence.** Identify your friend's abilities and strengths, build on them, and encourage your friend to do their best.
- **Give compliments.** Compliments help us to remember the positives in our lives, especially when times get tough.
- **Give and accept support**
- **Manage stress.** Help your friend to learn what stresses them and how they can manage it in healthy ways before it overwhelms them.
- **Deal with moods.** Support your friend to find safe and constructive ways to talk about negative feelings, such as anger or sadness. Sports, writing (keeping a journal), painting, dancing, making crafts, are all good ways to help deal with difficult emotions.
- **Encourage your friend** to do things they're good at and to have the courage to step outside their comfort zone and try something new.
- **Share humour.** Have fun together. Take some time to laugh with your friend.
- **Be accepting** of different types of people, and include others even if they are different than you. Focus on what you like about who they are as people.

Helping others to acknowledge their strengths and feel good about themselves can also help you recognize your own strengths and ways you can support your own mental wellness.

If you or if your friend needs more help, call Health Link at 811 or the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.