

Name _____

Be a Buddy, Be a Support: Recognizing and Helping a Friend with Mental Health

Life can be a rollercoaster ride with its highs and lows, and sometimes, our friends may experience tough times that affect their mental health. Being a good friend means not only having fun together but also being there when they need support. In this passage, we'll explore how to recognize when a friend may be struggling with their mental health and how to offer them the help and care they deserve.



1. Signs to Look For

Recognizing that a friend is going through a tough time with their mental health isn't always easy. However, there are some common signs to watch out for:

- **Changes in Behavior:** Pay attention if your friend starts behaving differently. This could include sudden mood swings, increased irritability, or withdrawing from activities they used to enjoy.
- **Isolation:** If your friend begins isolating themselves from others and avoiding social situations, it might be a sign that they're struggling.
- **Drop in School Performance:** A significant drop in grades or difficulty concentrating can be a clue that something is amiss.
- **Loss of Interest:** If your friend loses interest in things they used to be passionate about, such as hobbies or sports, this is a sign of potential mental health challenges.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Sometimes, mental health struggles can manifest as physical symptoms like headaches, stomachaches, or changes in appetite or sleep patterns.

2. Start a Conversation

If you notice these signs in your friend, it's essential to start a caring conversation. Here's how you can do it:

- **Choose the Right Time:** Find a quiet and comfortable place to talk where both you and your friend can be open and relaxed.
- **Be a Good Listener:** Let your friend express their feelings without interruption. Show empathy and understanding by nodding and offering supportive statements like, "I'm here for you."
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Instead of asking yes-or-no questions, ask open-ended ones that encourage your friend to share more about what they're going through.

Name _____

- **Avoid Judging:** Remember that mental health challenges are not a sign of weakness, and your friend should not feel judged or ashamed.
- **Offer Help:** Let your friend know that you're there to support them and that they don't have to go through this alone.

3. Encourage Professional Help

Sometimes, a friend may need professional assistance to deal with their mental health challenges. It's essential to encourage them to seek help from a counselor, therapist, or a trusted adult. You can offer to help them find resources or even accompany them to appointments if they're comfortable with it.

4. Be Patient and Understanding

Supporting a friend through mental health struggles can be a long journey. Be patient, and don't expect immediate changes. Your friend may have good days and bad days, but your continued support can make a significant difference.

5. Self-Care for You

Supporting a friend who is struggling with their mental health can also be emotionally challenging. Don't forget to take care of yourself too. Talk to a trusted adult or counselor if you're feeling overwhelmed, and remember that you're doing your best to be a caring and supportive friend.



The Artist's Story: Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo, a renowned Mexican artist, is known for her distinctive and emotionally charged artwork. She painted self-portraits that often depicted her physical and emotional pain. Frida Kahlo faced numerous physical and mental health challenges throughout her life, including chronic pain, surgeries, and depression.

Frida used her art as a way to express her inner turmoil and the emotions she experienced due to her health struggles. Her paintings allowed her to communicate her feelings, fears, and hopes. Frida's ability to channel her mental and emotional experiences into her art is a powerful example of how creativity can be a therapeutic outlet.