

5 ways to show support when someone is struggling

We've all been known to wear a mask — including putting on a smile, even when feeling down. So, it can be difficult to tell if a friend or loved one is experiencing a mental health challenge. But if you notice changes in behavior, mood, and appearance that cause you to be worried about their mental health, here are several things you can do:

1 Be there.

You don't need to have all the answers. Sit, listen, and simply be present when they need to talk. Hold their hand. Give them a hug. Ask gentle questions and respond with encouraging statements.

2 Get them out of their head.

Mental health challenges can sometimes make us feel stuck in our bad feelings and prevent us from planning activities we enjoy. Get them out of the house — and their own head — with low-stress activities like bike rides, going to a movie, or taking a walk.

3 Remember: They are not their diagnosis.

People who struggle with their mental health will often lash out at those they care about most. Remind yourself that this is their condition talking, not them. But also keep your boundaries. Mental health challenges are an explanation, not an excuse, for mean or cruel behavior.

4 Help connect them with expert care.

Seeing a counselor or therapist can often provide the necessary tools, support, and sometimes the medication we need to feel and be our best. But finding the right therapist can be difficult. To help a struggling loved one, offer to make calls, book appointments, and drive to sessions. Taking on those tasks can alleviate some of their stress and worry.

5 Prioritize *your* self-care, too.

Many long-term caregivers end up experiencing burnout or even developing depression themselves. Take steps to keep yourself healthy: Enjoy a break when you need it, ask for help from supportive friends and family, and find your own therapist to confide in regularly.

continued on the next page



Finding the right words

It's hard to know what to say when you see a friend or loved one struggling. If someone confides in you, or you're worried about their mental health, try the following supportive phrases:

SAY THIS:

"I love you."

"I am here for you."

"How can I help?"

"What is the best way I can support you?"

"Your feelings are valid."

"That sounds hard. I'm sorry you're going through this."

"I may not understand how you're feeling, but you're not alone."

NOT THIS:

"Think positive!"

"Snap out of it."


"I know exactly how you feel."

"It could be worse."

"It's just in your head."

"Why can't you get it together?"

"It's your fault."



**You are not alone —
we're here to help!**

If you or a family member needs extra mental health support, you have resources through your State of South Dakota benefits. A good place to start is your [Mental Health Resource Guide](#). It's full of information to help connect you with supportive and effective care.

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