
FEUP
Healthy Minds

You deserve it



Contacts

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Psychological support by appointment:

Mondays to Fridays, from 9:30 to 15:30

PSYCHOLOGY AND GUIDANCE SERVICE

FEUP FACULDADE DE ENGENHARIA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

Helping a colleague...

**Knowing how
to listen**

Friendship and **sharing** difficulties with others can be important resources for dealing with adversity.

If the opportunity arises to talk to a colleague or friend, it's important to know how to help, to be available and to listen.

Preparing a conversation

Try to find the best possible conditions to talk, so that they make your colleague as comfortable as possible.

- Choose **where** to talk:
 - a quiet place with no interruptions;
 - a relaxing activity that takes the focus away from the conversation and allows you to talk about it - walking in parks or by the sea, having a coffee, lunch, dinner, etc.
- Choose **when** to talk:
 - a one-by-one moment (even if the group of friends is preoccupied, it's better to talk as a couple, without making the person feel trapped);
 - a moment when you really have time to listen;
 - situations that are not particularly challenging for the person, given the problem they are facing.

Make yourself **available** so that your colleague can choose the way or moment in which they feel most comfortable talking (e.g. SMS, chat, phone call, video call, written letter, etc.).

Having a conversation

- **Try to be prepared beforehand.** Write down specific things you want to say or write a letter to your friend if it seems appropriate.
- **Respect privacy.** Try to respect your colleague's timings and the fact that they may not yet be ready to share their problem with anyone else. Support and encourage her/him to activate the necessary resources, respecting her/his pace.
- **Pay attention to your own body language.** Maintain an open, welcoming and available posture.
- **Choose to focus more on feelings and thoughts than on behaviors.** Look at the big picture of the problem rather than the details of the situation.
- **Favor open-ended questions.** Give room for elaboration and be supportive and understanding. Opt for questions like "what can I do to help you?" or "what bothers you about this situation?", rather than "why did you do it?".
- **Don't worry about not understanding everything or not knowing what to say.** Try not to appear shocked or judgmental and remember that the best thing you can offer is an opportunity to talk and make the other feel supported.
- **Practice active and reflective listening.** Really listen to what your friend is communicating and give back emotions they may be feeling without realizing it.

Keep in touch

Helping a friend isn't just about listening to them at a given moment, it's about **accompanying them and continuing to show concern, availability and presence** in their life.

- **Suggest that you make plans together:** invite them to **lunch/dinner**, go for a **walk**, see a **movie**, have a **game night**, etc.
- **Make her/him feel accompanied:** leave them a **message** that makes them smile and doesn't necessarily imply a reply; **call** her/him during vacations or periods when you're apart; bring them little **treats**, like a sweet she/he likes or something you know she/he especially values.
- **Keep inviting them to group plans**, even if they sometimes refuse. This will ensure that he/she continues to **feel included** despite the difficulties he/she may be going through.

It's important to understand that, when going through a difficult phase, variations in mood, disposition or motivation may occur and that the person may become more sensitive or irritable. Remember that this may not concern your friendship, but rather your friend's mental state and that you should understand and welcome these circumstances and encourage them to seek help!

Don't give up on helping and make yourself available to seek other types of support if necessary.