



for Scotland's mental health

A pair of feet wearing black leggings and colorful floral boots with white laces, standing on a set of concrete stairs. The boots have a white base with a dense pattern of red, purple, and green flowers. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

A SAMH guide for young people

**We all have
mental health,
just as we all have
physical health,
regardless of
what age we are.**



Half of mental health problems in adulthood begin by the age of 14, and three quarters by the age of 24.

As a friend, you're likely to be one of the first people to notice if someone is acting differently. If you're concerned about a friend, don't be afraid to ask them how they're feeling.

There are many barriers that stop people from talking about their mental health, but talking about the problem is the first step to being able to get help.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- Make the time and space to listen and support your friend.
- Ask open-ended questions that go deeper than "yes" or "no" answers.
- Avoid giving advice and focus on listening to what's going on for them.
- Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking.
- Be non-judgemental: try not to assume you know what caused their problem or that you know how to fix it.
- Don't dismiss their problem/s.

Remember, talking about what's going on can be hard. There are many reasons why people don't talk about their mental health. If they're not ready, just remind them that you're there when they need you.



It's not always possible to provide your friend with the support they need, especially if the problem is serious. It's important to speak to someone else if you need to – an adult you trust, or a helpline like Childline.

OKAY, NOW WHAT?

So you listened to your friend... Now what? Although there is no "one size fits all" way to support someone, but here are some tips on how to be there for your friend.

- Sometimes a chat and a hug is enough, but if you're still worried after you've spoken, encourage them to seek help – perhaps booking an appointment with their GP.
- Remind them that you'll be there to support them.
- Keep in contact, even if they don't feel like socialising as much as they used to.
- Keep inviting them to do the usual fun stuff you do together.
- Encourage them to join in everyday activities.
- Do small things to show you care – like sending them a thoughtful text or making them a cup of tea.
- Come up with a plan for what to do on their "bad days" (e.g. people they can talk to, self-care techniques they can try).
- Be patient: there will be good days and bad days, and motivation to change can fluctuate over time.

Sometimes people who are distressed may say hurtful things that they don't mean – try not to take it personally.

Be realistic about what you can do, and don't try to 'fix' them.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

SAMH (SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH)

t: 0141 530 1000

e: enquire@samh.org.uk

w: samh.org.uk

Details of local SAMH services and information and sign-posting for people concerned about mental health. Office hours 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday.

CHILDLINE

t: 0800 1111

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

w: childline.org.uk

A free, private and confidential service for anyone under 19 in the UK.

BREATHING SPACE

t: 0800 83 85 87

(Monday to Thursday, 6pm – 2am; Friday 6pm to Monday 6am)

w: breathingspace.scot

A free, confidential helpline for anyone in Scotland feeling low, anxious or depressed.

EPIC FRIENDS

w: epicfriends.co.uk

Designed to help teenagers understand and support their friends through difficult times.

THE MIX

t: 0808 808 4994

w: themix.org.uk

Free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile.

PLACE2BE

e: Scotland@place2be.org.uk

w: place2be.org.uk

Providing emotional and therapeutic services in primary and secondary schools, building children's resilience through talking, creative work and play.

SAMARITANS

t: 116 123

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

e: jo@samaritans.org

Free, confidential service for anyone in the UK.

YOUNGMINDS

t: 0808 802 5544

(Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4pm)

w: youngminds.org.uk

Information and resources for young people and parents on mental health.

NHS24

t: 111

w: nhs24.com

24 hour health service for Scotland.

www.samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health.
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