

MATES AND MENTAL HEALTH



How to talk to a friend who is struggling

HOW TO ASK IF THEY'RE OK

Find the right time to chat

Sometimes it's easier to have these conversations when there is less eye contact such as going for a walk, watching TV or doing an activity together.

Choose a calm, natural moment and don't force it.

Having conversation starters prepared such as:

"We haven't talked in a while, what's been happening?"

"I know you're going through stuff, I just want you to know that I'm here for you."

Take notice

"I remember you mentioned being upset about ___ last week, how are you doing today?"

"You haven't seemed yourself lately – want to talk?"

"I've noticed you haven't been at footy a lot, is everything okay?"

HOW TO LISTEN AND SUPPORT WELL

Let them talk and listen to them

You are not expected to have any answers or fix things but you can give them a space to be heard.

Take it seriously

Be aware of how much courage it took them to speak up about their challenges.

Spend time with them

Invite them to join you in doing things they enjoy like watching a movie or going for a walk.

Put distractions away

When listening avoid checking your phone or watch to try and focus on the conversation, allowing your friend to feel valued by you.

Listen to their body language

Non-verbal cues such as facial expression or tone of voice can tell you a lot, it may tell you more than what your friend is saying.

GETTING SUPPORT

Encourage them to find support, like a trusted adult in their family or someone at school.

Ask them what they need or how you can help them.

Help your friend find good information, resources or contact details for support services that could help.

Make sure you look after yourself too and get some support yourself.
Who can you chat to?

CHECK-IN

It doesn't end with one conversation. Check back in with them and remind them that you are there and that you care.

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How to help a friend who is having a panic attack

WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK

A panic attack is a sudden feeling of intense fear or anxiety that can happen even when someone is safe.

They can make someone's heart race, breathing become faster, or leave them feeling dizzy or shaky, but these feelings will pass. Even though panic attacks can feel overwhelming, they are not dangerous and they do not last forever.

Many people experience panic attacks.

DURING THE PANIC ATTACK

Stay calm

Stay with them and stay calm. Remind them that they are safe and try to keep your voice calm.

Create a safe sapce

Invite them to sit down somewhere comfortable and give them some persoanl space. If there are others around, encoruge them to take a step back and not to crowd them.

Grounding

Grounding tecniques can be helpful. Get your friend to tell you what they can see or look for things a certain colour. You can also get them to engage their other senses such as stamping their feet, feeling something around them or listening to what they can hear.

Breathe with them

Encourage them to slow down their breathing. You could do it with them: "Let's breathe in together for 5 secnds (breathe in together) and now let's breathe out (breathe out together). Repeat this a few times.

Talk to them

Chat about things they like e.g. films, topics or hobbies to distract them from anxious thoughts.

SOME HELPFUL PHRASES TO SAY

"You're safe right now"

"I am right here with you"

"You can get through this"

"These feelings won't last forever"

"Let's take a slow breath together"

"Let's focus on one thing at a time"

AFTER A PANIC ATTACK

After your friends panic attack, try to stay with them for a few minutes.

Ask them how they are doing and if they need anything. They may want to go to a different place or get some food or drink.

It can be helpful to understand if they have had panic attacks before and what helps them in those moments. This way you can be equipped to support them another time if you need to.

Check in with them in the coming days too.