

Worried about a friend?

5 tips to support them through a difficult period

Last week, I mentioned that for various reasons, many of us are struggling at the moment. We often talk about self-care and how it's important to reach out for help, but what if you're worried about a friend? Student Minds run a workshop called 'Looking after a Mate' that if you have the time, is incredibly helpful. In the meantime, below are some quick tips to try right now:

1) Listening is your superpower

Often, we may get caught up worrying about how to give the best advice or say the right thing. Please remember that you are not a professional, therapist, or doctor. Offering a listening ear is extremely valuable and can really make a difference. You can start by saying:

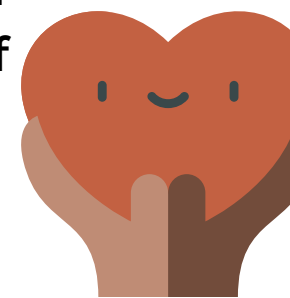
"How are you really doing at the moment? and then listen. If you feel unsure how to respond, ask them what you can do to support them right now. If you don't have the space to talk in-depth right now, try and create opportunities to talk privately.



2) Show them that you care

Gestures also help. Invite your friend to activities or events, even if you think that they won't attend. Let them know you understand if they need to cancel.

- Message them even though you know that they won't reply.
- Send them memes, jokes, and funny memories.
- Give them compliments and let them know how great they are.



3) Do some research

Again, I repeat: you are not a therapist. But it can help if you try and understand in your own time, what may be affecting your friend. For example, if they are having difficulties related to eating, sexuality, a specific mental health condition, or disability, it may help you understand slightly better if you can refer to resources. [Mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk) has some excellent ones.



4) Look after yourself

It's a cliché, but you can't meaningfully support someone if you are not taking care of yourself too. Worrying about a friend can be very stressful. In some situations, you may feel frustrated, powerless, or triggered. Talk to others about how this is affecting you or consider booking a wellbeing appointment for yourself.



5) Share your concerns

It shouldn't be all on you. Discuss your concerns with trusted mutual friends or family if safe. Encourage them to book an appointment with their **GP** and support them on the day (virtually still helps!). Consider contacting your **Personal Tutor**, **Senior Tutor**, or **Wellbeing advisor** for advice. If they are an Imperial student, encourage them to contact the confidential support available in the department and wider college such as the Student **Counselling** service. **If you are worried about their safety, please seek advice from any of the above ASAP.**

