

HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND



LISTEN TO LEARN

THE BEST WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOUR FRIEND IS TO, WELL, LISTEN.

Knowing how to listen well can be tricky – you might want to immediately give advice if a friend is coming to you with a problem, or, you might have your own strong opinions because you've been through the same thing and that's why they're turning to you for support. It's okay to not have the answers because your friend might just need to vent and feel understood.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS THAT CAN HELP YOU BE A GOOD LISTENER.

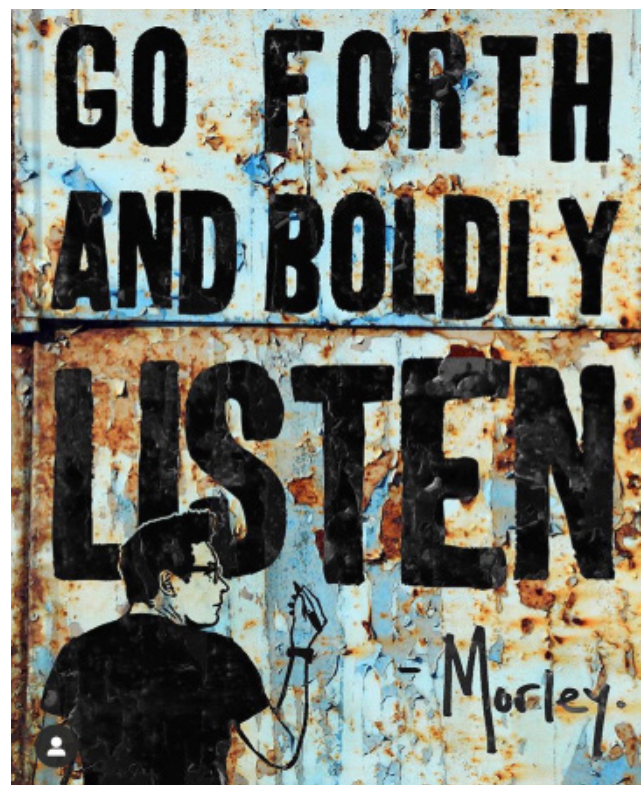
EMPATHIZE. It's natural to want to respond right away, especially if you disagree with what your friend is saying or think you have information that might be helpful. Your opinion matters and is genuine because you care about your friend. However, it's helpful to know if your friend wants input or just someone to listen to them. They may just appreciate you nodding and telling them that you understand their feelings. What's most important for them to know is that they can talk to you, because they trust that you won't judge them.

After you've listened to your friend's experience, you can thank them for trusting you enough to share. If you do have an opinion and think it might be helpful to your friend, after you've empathized and acknowledged your friend's experience, you could try saying, "I

heard you say _____ and I have an idea. . ." or "You know what I think?" Then pause to see if your friend wants that kind of support.

PUT THE PHONE AWAY. Don't answer your phone, look at incoming texts, or allow other interruptions while you and your friend are talking. It's important for your friend to know you're paying attention to what they are sharing.

BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE. Non-verbal support is just as important as your words. A nod here and there, leaning in, keeping your arms uncrossed or any sign that you understand and acknowledge what your friend is sharing, will help them feel more comfortable with you.



g)) HAVE A CONVERSATION

Sometimes, an important and difficult issue can come up in conversation such as anxiety, stress about school or a relationship, trouble at home, or peer pressure. Your friend is turning to you because they value your time and thoughts.



HERE ARE A FEW TIPS THAT CAN HELP YOU FIND YOUR WORDS.

SHOW YOUR LOVE! Let your friend know that you're there for them and that you're glad they feel like they can talk to you and turn to you when they need someone. Make sure you're comfortable with assuming this role in your relationship and that you are taking care of your own mental health as well.

BE DIRECT. If you're concerned about your friend or worried that they might get hurt – tell them. It's okay to let them know how you feel, as long as you're respectful, and have listened to their side of the story.

DO YOU FEEL SUPPORTED? IF YOUR FRIENDSHIP FEELS ONE-SIDED, AND YOU'RE ALWAYS GIVING AND NOT GETTING (LIKE YOU'RE ALWAYS LISTENING BUT NEVER GETTING TO VENT, TOO), IT MIGHT BE TIME TO HAVE A TALK WITH THEM. IT SOUNDS CHEESY, BUT THE BEST FRIENDSHIPS GO BOTH WAYS.

TRY NOT TO BE DEFENSIVE. A conversation takes at least two people and you and your friend might have different views on things. Your similarities and differences are what make your relationship exciting, even though it can be hard to always remember that in difficult conversations.

RELATE WHAT YOU HEAR TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES. Sometimes you will have experiences similar to your friend's that you think will be helpful to share. You can say something like, "I had a similar experience and something that worked for me was. . ." Make sure that you are listening more than you are sharing. If someone is coming to you for support, the conversation is about them, not you.

LISTEN AND VALIDATE YOUR FRIEND'S OPINION. TRY TO SEE THE SITUATION FROM THEIR SIDE AND THEN RESPECTFULLY OFFER YOUR OWN.

IF YOU DON'T AGREE, YOU CAN START WITH "I HEAR WHAT YOU'RE SAYING BUT I THINK I SEE IT A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY."

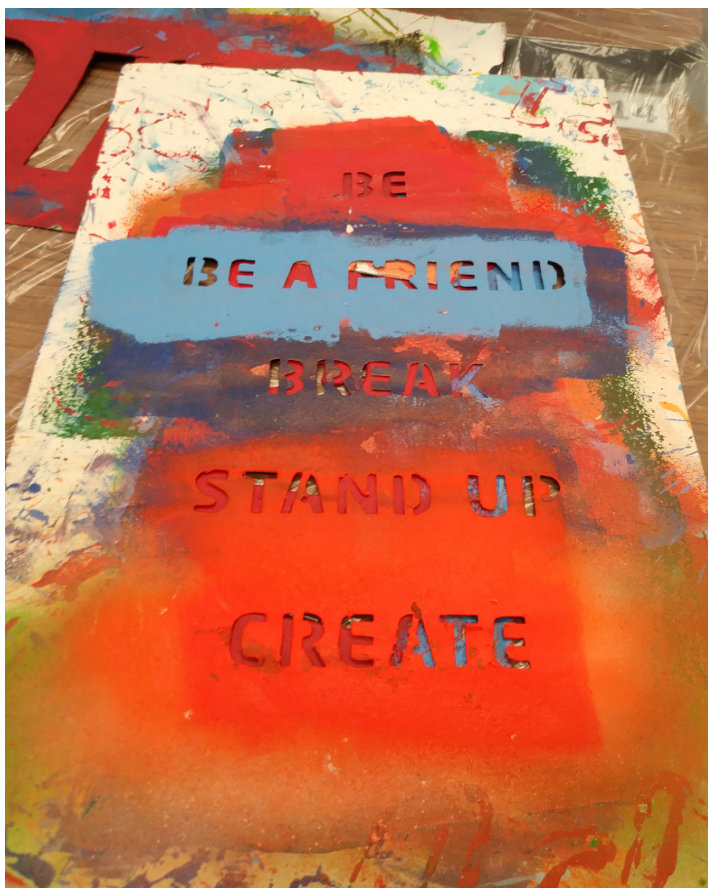
DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION, THEY MAY BE OPEN TO YOUR OPINION, OR THEY MAY NOT BE.



BE A GOOD FRIEND ONLINE

When you see hurtful or negative things happening to someone online, it's hard to know what to do. If you comment, will you make it better or worse? If you leave it alone, will someone else speak up? It can be difficult to decide what actions we should take in the moment, so here are a few tips for how to be a good friend online as well as in real life.

KNOW THE FACTS. Sometimes what you're seeing online may not be the whole story. What looks like bullying may actually be someone defending themselves or what looks like just a joke might hurt someone's feelings. If it's a friend involved, we might take their side before understanding the whole situation. It's important to get all the facts before acting.



AVOID MAKING EXCUSES. Fear and peer pressure can sometimes make us not do something we know is right. Ask yourself if you're doing any of these things:

- Minimizing it (It's just a joke)
- Denying it (That wouldn't hurt my feelings, so she can't really be hurting)
- Blaming the target (He deserved it)
- Avoiding it (Nobody else is doing anything about it)

THINK ABOUT THE OUTCOME. Sometimes youth that have been bullied say that telling a bully to stop can sometimes make things worse rather than better. It's important to ask yourself these questions before you take action:

- Does the person being targeted want me to speak out?
- Will taking action make things worse for the person or group being targeted?
- Have I talked to a trusted adult before speaking out?
- What are the potential consequences of do something or doing nothing?

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BE A GOOD FRIEND ONLINE?

Here's a list of things that you can do to make things better:

- Be kind to the person being bullied. Talk to them. Encourage them. Offer support and connect them to help if they need it.
- Tell a trusted adult about what is happening and ask for their support.
- Report cyber-bullying and offensive content to the social media platform.
- Get involved with preventing bullying at your school or in your community.
- Be a role model. Be kind and treat everyone with respect in your social media interactions.



GET HELP

Depending on the situation and your relationship with your friend, you might tell them that you want to go to someone else about the problem they have shared with you.

Trust your instincts. Part of being a good friend is knowing when the support your friend needs is more than you can give.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND THAT MIGHT NEED ADDITIONAL HELP?

Some things to look for are . . .

- Are they shutting people out?
- Have you heard them say they don't care and would rather sleep or numb their feelings?
- Are they not enjoying things they used to enjoy?
- Has their appearance and hygiene changed drastically?

These can be signs that they are struggling with a mental health condition such as depression or something serious going on in their life.

TALK TO A TRUSTED TEACHER, COUNSELOR, MENTOR, PARENT, OR ANOTHER PERSON IN YOUR SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY THAT CAN UNDERSTAND AND HELP DETERMINE APPROPRIATE NEXT STEPS . . .

Or, if you feel you need to remain anonymous, you can make a report to Safe2TellCO.org to have a counselor follow-up with your concerns.

If you need support with a crisis such as depression, suicidal thoughts, or substance abuse, text TALK to 38255 to be connected to a professional at Colorado Crisis Services.



See it.



Report it.



Stop it.

safe²tell
Colorado

WEB: safe2tellco.org

APP:  

CALL: 1-877-542-7233

I'M HAPPY

**that people think I'm
doing OK.**

Text TALK to 38255

a personal, confidential
text support line

REFERENCES

AboveTheInfluence.com

StopBullying.gov

Media Smarts, [Your Connected Life: A Teen's Guide to Life Online](#), 2015.



abovetheinfluence.com