



# Supporting a Friend

**"I get by with a little help from my friends." - The Beatles**

**Good friends look out for each other, and you might be in the right place at the right time to make a big difference.**

**Looking out means noticing the verbal, behavioral and environmental clues that your friend is struggling. These may include:**

- **Statements of distress,**
- **Poor self-care such as not showering or dressing messily,**
- **Self-isolation and social withdrawal,**
- **Substance use,**
- **Sudden weight loss or gain,**
- **Risky behavior or suicidal gestures,**
- **Panic attacks and avoidance,**
- **Increased sleep or insomnia,**
- **loss of 'fun,'**
- **Drastic changes in typical behavior.**

**Lending a supportive ear is one of the most caring ways you can help. Check out the reverse side for some helpful tips and strategies.**

**Sadness, anger, anxiety and frustration are all normal and healthy human emotions. It's OK to be upset sometimes! Reassure your friend that nothing is wrong with them for having feelings.**

**If you feel overwhelmed, the Bentley Community is full of caring people available to help you - RAs, Coaches, Peer Mentors, Greek Life 'Biggs', Professors and Police, Spiritual Life, Multicultural & CISS staff...**

**If the situation warrants professional intervention, or if signs of serious mental illness are present, encourage your friend to contact the Bentley Counseling Center at 781-891-2274. You can also contact the campus CARE Team yourself at:**

**<https://www.bentley.edu/offices/student-affairs/bentley-cares>**



## Ways to Practice

**Ask your friend if they would like to talk, seeking permission rather than pressuring them to open up. Respect their right to decline.**

**Make sure you find a private, comfortable space to talk.**

**Demonstrate your concern by stating your observations - "I'm worried as I've noticed you haven't been coming out of your room lately."**

**Listen more than you speak, make eye contact, and give your friend time to work through their thoughts. Don't interrupt or rush.**

**Avoid problem solving unless asked - chances are your friend is already considering solutions and is more interested in your listening than solving the problem for them.**

**Ask, "How can I help?" Try your best to fulfill reasonable requests.**

**Express hope that your friends' problems can and will be solved.**

**Avoid making promises to do things for your friend that you cannot do, and remember that helping your friend should not compromise your safety in any way. Don't keep dangerous secrets!**

**Follow-up after a supportive conversation to let the person know you are thinking about them. Small gestures make a big difference!**

**Be on the lookout for warning signs of suicide - hopelessness, isolation, morbid statements or "jokes", giving away of prized possessions, saying goodbye, surrendering future plans and aspirations, and gathering of weapons or other means are red flags. If you notice any of these things, don't be afraid to ask the person directly, "Have you been thinking about suicide?" Don't worry - they will be relieved you are looking out for them and your words won't cause harm. If they answer yes, don't panic, ask them to stay with you as you contact help from a Bentley authority as soon as you can (Bentley Police, Residence Life Staff, Counseling Center).**