

How To Be a Good Friend

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time. *Proverbs 17:17*

Conversations about mental health with your teens can be challenging. Encourage your teens to embody Christ's love by being good friends to those who may be grappling with mental health issues. Remind them that showing kindness and patience reflects the teachings of Jesus. They can be a source of comfort and encouragement by simply being there for their friends, just as Jesus is there for us. Encourage open communication and note that seeking professional help when needed is a courageous step, emphasizing the importance of caring for one another's well-being.

➤ conversation starter

I've noticed that [friend's name] seems to be going through a tough time lately. Have you noticed anything, or has [friend's name] mentioned anything to you? I'm here to talk about how we can be supportive. What are your thoughts?

➤ navigating the conversation:

- **Express Concern:** Share your observations without being judgmental. Use "I" statements to express your feelings. For example, "I've noticed that [friend's name] seems to be going through a tough time."
- **Listen Actively:** Allow teens to share their thoughts and feelings. Listen without interrupting.
- **Encourage Empathy:** Reinforce the importance of empathy and understanding. Remind them that mental health struggles are real and may require patience and compassion.
- **Discuss Christian Values:** Connect the conversation to Christian values such as love, compassion, and being a source of support for others.
- **Offer Support:** Let teens know that they don't need to have all the answers. Being there for their friend, offering support, and showing that they care can be incredibly meaningful.
- **Suggest Professional Help:** Remind teens that it's okay to suggest seeking professional help if their friend is struggling. Use kindness and care to establish a peaceful conversation; this should never be used as an insult or accusation. Encourage them to let a trusted adult, like a teacher or school counselor, know about the situation.
- **Check-In Regularly:** Encourage teens to check in on their friend regularly. Simple gestures like sending a text or spending time together can make a positive impact.
- **Set Boundaries:** Remind your teens to be mindful of their own well-being. Supporting a friend is important, but it's equally crucial to set healthy boundaries and seek help if they feel overwhelmed.
- **Know When to Involve Authorities:** If your child's friends are being hurt physically, sexually, emotionally, or mentally, it's important that they get the help they need. Consult with a trusted adult, like a pastor or counselor, when the proper authorities need to become involved in a situation.

