



WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY
COUNSELING CENTER

GIVING SOCIAL SUPPORT

You can help family members and friends cope with the disaster by spending time with them and listening carefully. Most people recover better when they feel connected to others who care about them. Some people choose not to talk about their experiences very much, and others may need to discuss their experiences. For some, talking about things that happened because of the disaster can help those events seem less overwhelming. For others, just spending time with people they feel close to and accepted by, without having to talk, can feel best. Here is some information about giving support to other people.

REASONS WHY PEOPLE MAY AVOID SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Not knowing what they need
- Feeling embarrassed or "weak"
- Fearing they will lose control
- Not wanting to burden others
- Doubting it will be helpful, or that others will be helpful
- Having tried to get help and feeling that it wasn't there
- Wanting to avoid thinking or feeling about the event
- Assuming that others will be disappointed or judgmental
- Not knowing where to get help

GOOD WAYS TO GIVE SUPPORT

- Show interest, attention and care
- Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk
- Be free of expectations or judgments
- Show respect for the person's reactions and ways of coping
- Acknowledge that this type of stress can take time to resolve
- Help brainstorm positive ways to deal with reactions
- Talk about expectable reactions to disasters, and healthy coping
- Express belief that the person is capable of recovery
- Offer to talk or spend time together as many times as is needed

BEHAVIORS THAT INTERFERE WITH GIVING SUPPORT

- Rushing to tell someone they will be okay or that they should just "get over it"
- Discussing your own personal experiences without listening to the other person's story
- Stopping people from talking about what is bothering them
- Acting like someone is weak or exaggerating because they aren't coping as well as you are
- Giving advice without listening to the person's concerns or asking the person what works for them
- Telling them they were lucky it wasn't worse

WHEN YOUR SUPPORT IS NOT ENOUGH

- Let the person know that experts think that avoidance and withdrawal are likely to increase distress, and social support helps recovery.
- Encourage the person to get involved in a support group with others who have similar experience.
- Encourage the person to talk with a counselor, clergy, or medical professional and offer to accompany them.
- Enlist help from others in your social circle so that you all take part in supporting the person.

SEEKING SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Making contact with others can help reduce feeling of distress
- Children and adolescents can benefit from spending some time with similar-age peers
- Connections can be with family, friends or others who are coping with the same traumatic event

SOCIAL SUPPORT OPTIONS

- Spouse/partner or parents
- Trusted family member
- Close friend
- Clergy
- Doctor or nurse
- Crisis/School counselor or other counselor
- Support group
- Co-worker/Teacher/Coach
- Pet

DO...

- Decide carefully whom to talk to
- Decide ahead of time what you want to discuss
- Chose the right time and place
- Start by talking about practical things
- Let others know you need to talk or just to be with them
- Talk about painful thoughts and feelings when you're ready
- Ask others if it's a good time to talk
- Tell others you appreciate them listening
- Tell others what you need or how they could help—one main thing that would help you right now

DON'T...

- Keep quiet because you don't want to upset others
- Keep quiet because you're worried about being a burden
- Assume that others don't want to listen
- Wait until you're so stressed or exhausted that you can't fully benefit from help

WAYS TO GET CONNECTED

- Calling friends or family on the phone
- Increasing contact with existing acquaintances and friends
- Renewing or beginning involvement in religious group activities
- Getting involved with a support group
- Getting involved in community/school recovery activities

CRISIS RESOURCES

- Crisis Text Line: Text SUPPORT to 741-741
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): 800-950-6264
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Trevor Project (for LGBTQ youth): 1-866-488-7386 or thetrevorproject.org
- Wake Forest Counseling Center 24/7 Call Service: 336-758-5273
- 758-CARE : 336-758-2273