How to Help a Friend

STRESS & ANXIETY

What is stress vs. anxiety?

Stress is a natural response to daily pressures that causes adrenaline to be released into the body. In moderate doses, stress motivates us to complete tasks and make life changes. However, chronic high levels of stress can weaken the immune system and cause high blood pressure, fatigue, and anxiety.

Anxiety is characterized by persistent and excessive periods of worry or long lasting feelings of dread over anticipated events that can be accompanied by muscle tension, restlessness, fatigue, changes in weight/appetite, and problems in concentration. Intense, long-lasting anxiety could be a sign of an anxiety disorder, which has many different forms.

What to look for:

People experiencing stress and/or anxiety may exhibit a range of signs, such as:

- Feeling overwhelmed, agitated, moody; possibly discussing poor self-esteem or the need for control.
- Changes in energy level, such as feeling fatigued or jittery, and changes in appetite. Your friend may also talk about insomnia or over-sleeping.
- Frequent worrying, racing thoughts, forgetfulness, or having trouble focusing.
- Avoiding friends, activities, or social events.
- It’s important to remember that everyone experiences some of these symptoms from time to time. Stress and/or anxiety become problematic when many of these symptoms are happening most of the time.

How to help a friend:

If you notice a friend struggling with stress and/or anxiety:

- Help your friend practice self-care: eating consistent, healthy meals, getting 7-9 hours of sleep each night, and participating in regular physical activity are all essential for managing stress.
- Be there to listen. Everyone experiences stress and anxiety differently and sometimes people need a sounding board for their experiences. Be open and calm.
- If your friend is overwhelmed, encourage them to talk to a professional about managing stress and anxiety.

Additional resources:

If your friend needs additional support, connect them with Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS):

- CAPS at C4C: 303-492-6766
- CAPS at Wardenburg: 303-492-5654

For additional information, see www.colorado.edu/counseling

Be helpful. Be open. Be well.

Be Boulder.