

# Giving Social Support in Six Steps



Sometimes you would like to help someone, but you know it is unwise to take on their problems. It can be helpful to think about and decide what you can do that may truly help, without harming the connections you have built for yourself and your family. Use these six steps when learning to give support to others:

## 1. **What Kind of Problem Is the Person Facing?**

Think carefully about the type of problem the person is facing. Is he feeling sad or discouraged? Does she need help doing something, such as repairing something that is broken? Do they need someone who can help clean something up or run an errand?

## 2. **What Type of Support Can I Give to Be Helpful?**

Think through the types of support that you could give—or get others to give—that would help the person. Is it helping directly with the problem (such as helping to carry something or to fix something)? Is it helping to get his/her mind off things by going for a walk, seeing a movie, or doing something together? As you think through this, avoid taking on more than you can handle. Invite other people to join you if the problem is a difficult one.

## 3. **Find the Right Time.**

Because you'll be talking to the person about something that matters to him/her, find a time to talk when he/she can listen to you ("Do you have the time to talk right now?").

## 4. **Find the Right Place/Space.**

Make sure your meeting place allows your friend and you comfort, safety, and privacy. When choosing a convenient place, consider your friend's travel time.

## 5. **Offer to Help.**

Once you have found a good time to talk, tell him/her that you care and you would like to help. Do not make him/her feel uncomfortable by implying that he/she isn't handling things well.

## 6. **Provide Help in a Sensitive Way.**

If the person agrees to receive support, be sensitive. Pay attention to the kind of help he/she is asking for or wishes to receive, and when and how much help he/she wants. Be gracious; if he/she thanks you, then say "You are welcome."