There are many services and resources on campus designed to help students navigate their way through any issues or concerns that may arise. It’s important to note that you can use these services to seek support for your own needs or to seek guidance when helping someone else.

For example, you can make a free appointment at Counselling Services to discuss an issue that a friend is facing and to seek information on how to adequately provide support to that friend. As well, if you are being personally affected by an issue that someone else is experiencing, this is also a good reason to use these services.

For example, if a roommate is going through a rough time and relying on you too much for support, this could make you feel overwhelmed and stressed. In this situation, seeking out help on campus for you and your friend could be a good first step in addressing the issue. Regardless of your need, there are likely services on campus designed to help.

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Tips for Helping Someone

Listen

Sometimes, one of the best things we can do to support those around us is to simply listen. Talking about an issue with someone and having our feelings validated can be helpful in taking care of ourselves and approaching our concern. It’s important to take the time to listen to our friends and show them we are listening actively by making eye contact, putting our phones away, and having a conversation in a quiet place.

Refer

We are not professionals and though it is good to support others, there are times when people need more help than we can offer. In these cases, it is better to refer your friend to someone more suitable to help. When referring a friend, saying something like “I am here to help and support but I think that professional help can benefit you more than I can. I am still here to listen when you need it and want to help in any way that I can” lets them know you care but also sets a clear boundary. By doing this, your friend still knows that you are willing to support them but they also know that the help that they need is beyond your capabilities.

Follow Up

It can take a lot of courage for someone to disclose something personal to someone else. Taking the time to follow up with that person can be important in letting them know we are still there to support them. This is also a good time to restate your referral if you previously made one and to provide contact information to the service that you referred in order to best help the person in need. Often, these issues do not simply go away and they require support along the way. Following up is a good way of providing support to your friend throughout the entire process.

Take Care of Yourself

Remember that you have your own needs and can only do so much. If at any point you are becoming
overwhelmed by supporting your friend, it’s important to recognize this, take a step back and perhaps refer your friend to a professional or service.

**When in Doubt, Seek Help**

If at any point you are unsure of what you should do, remember there are many places on campus that you can go to for help. [1]

**University of Guelph A.L.E.R.T Model:**

The University has adopted the following response model (A.L.E.R.T.) to use when you want to help someone you know.

A.L.E.R.T. is an acronym that stands for:

- Acknowledge
- Listen
- Engage
- Refer
- Talk

This model can be helpful in responding to any situation involving mental health concerns, and depending on the nature of the relationship with the person you know, different stages of the model will need to be emphasized.

**ACKNOWLEDGE** what the person is saying and feeling in a sensitive and compassionate way. Trust your instincts even if an individual denies that there is a difficulty. You can still let the person know that you are concerned, and that you want to help.

**LISTEN** to the individual in private when both of you have time. Allowing the person to talk without interruption, and offering your undivided attention, can help the person to feel cared about and more confident about what to do. Reflecting back what you believe the individual is saying can help him/her to feel heard.

**ENGAGE** without making generalizations or assumptions about the person. Be specific about the behaviour which is the cause for concern. It is okay to ask about it, and to name what you see. For example, a Faculty member may say, “I’ve noticed that you have not been in class lately, and I’m concerned.” Offer hope and reassure the student that things can get better. Assist the person in realizing that there are always options and resources, and that life will not always seem hopeless.

**REFER** the student to Counselling Services at Ext. 53244 or Student Health Services at Ext. 52131 to access immediate help and support. Both services have counsellors and doctors available on an emergency basis. To facilitate the referral you can offer to contact either service on their behalf, or offer to accompany the student for an appointment to the service provider.

Except in an emergency situation, you must respect the person’s right to accept or refuse a referral. However, if it is a life threatening emergency and the student refuses to access any of the resources available, immediately consult with either Counselling or Health Services for assistance. Offer to follow up with the student.

If the crisis is of a severe and extreme nature, the Crisis Management Team may be co-ordinated and the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs) will be informed and consulted on the situation. **TALK** with Staff from either Counselling Services (Ext. 53244) or Health Services (Ext. 52131) about
the situation, resources that are available and to discuss a plan of action. Consult with colleagues or supervisors for support, guidance, and assistance.