



# HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

Facebook and Instagram are proud to work with The Jed Foundation and The Clinton Foundation, non-profits that work to promote emotional wellbeing, to share potential warning signs that a friend might be in emotional distress and need your help.



## POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

If you see someone posting distressing content on Facebook or Instagram, or if they are behaving dramatically differently than usual, it may signal that this person needs help. **If you have a gut feeling that something is not right, you should act on it.**

Be aware of statuses/posts, messages, photos, videos, links, comments or hashtags that include the following themes:

- **Feeling alone, hopeless, isolated, useless, or a burden to others:** “I feel like I’m in a black hole”; “I don’t want to get out of bed...ever”; “Leave me alone”; “I can’t do anything”
- **Showing irritability and hostility that is out of character:** “I hate everyone”; “F\*@K the world”
- **Showing impulsive behaviors:** Like driving recklessly, a significant change in, and especially increase in substance use or taking other risks
- **Insomnia posts:** “3am again and no sleep”
- **Withdrawal from everyday activities:** “Missed another chem lab – I’m such a waste”; “Another day in bed under the covers”

- **Use of Negative Emoticons:** for example, repeatedly using emoticons that suggest someone is feeling down or thinking about using a tool to hurt themselves.



- **Use of Concerning Hashtags:** #depressed #lonely #whenimgone #noonecares #suicidal #selfharm #hatemyself #alone #sad #lost #worthless #neverenough #givingup  
Currently, when someone searches for a hashtag indicative of self-harm (for example, “#cutting”) on Instagram, a content advisory warning pop-up will appear. People have the

option to select “Learn More” before viewing any posts.

- **Following Activity:** On either Facebook’s ‘News Feed’, or Instagram’s ‘Following Activity’, you can see the accounts and posts people start to follow. If you notice a friend liking or following feeds or posts that promote negative behaviors, even if they aren’t sharing concerning content themselves, may serve as a warning sign that they are engaging with troubling messages or communities.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If you see someone posting messages, photos, videos, links, comments or hashtags that suggest the person is in emotional distress, you should reach out and get them the help they may need.

I can’t handle any of this 😞



“I’ve noticed you haven’t been yourself lately. Are you okay?”

## HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

If you have a friend who seems to be struggling with an issue that may be more serious than they can handle, there is a lot that you can do to support them.

**Reach out – pick up the phone, swing by their dorm room, walk with them between classes,** let them know they are not alone in feeling this way and that **it’s ok to ask for help.** Be clear and direct, and **do not use hints such as using the “Like” button or replying with an emoticon,** as these could be misinterpreted by the person you’re trying to help.

Understanding that it can be tough to start this conversation, here are some suggestions on how you can reach out:

- “I’m worried about you because you seem...” (e.g., sad, withdrawn, etc.).

– Have examples ready such as, “It concerned me when you said...” **Be specific** about what you noticed.

- “Do you want to talk about it?”; “What can I do to help?”
  - If they say no, then you might say: “It’s okay if you don’t want to talk to me, but it is important that you talk to someone.”
- Offer to help them connect with the campus counseling service or health center, chaplain or dean of students, or other mental health services.

*Never be afraid to give your friend a call, pay a visit, or send them a Facebook message to let them know you are concerned, and offer to help connect them with any extra support needed.*



Post Photo

No one would care if I were gone

Post

## WARNING SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY NEED URGENT HELP OR MAY BE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

While it can be hard, particularly on social media, to know if someone is exaggerating, being sarcastic or being serious, **if someone threatens to take their own life, you should always take them seriously.**

Here are some examples of things someone at risk of suicide might post about:

- **Suicide or wanting to die:** “I want out”; “Everyone would be better off without me”; “No one would care if I were gone”; “There’s no reason to live”

- **Intense and urgent emotional despair or intense guilt or shame, feeling trapped:** “I can’t take it [the pain] anymore”; “There is no way out”; “I’m done”; “I’m so sorry for all the trouble I’ve caused everyone”
- **Rage or seeking revenge:** “I’ll show you all”; “She’ll be sorry”
- **Saying goodbyes, giving away personal possessions:** “I’ll miss you all”; “You won’t have to worry about me anymore”
- **Glorifying or glamorizing death, or making death seem heroic:** “Death is beautiful”
- **Where/how to get potentially lethal means, like access to pills or weapons**



## National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

### HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IN URGENT NEED OR WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

**1.** If someone is threatening their own life or someone else's life, this is an emergency. If you feel comfortable, you should bring your friend to the Emergency Room. Or you call 911 or campus emergency services **immediately**. If it's safe to do so, stay with that person or do what you can to contact them or find someone to stay with them until help arrives.

**2.** You can use the following national services any time:

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

OR

reach the organization via Facebook chat <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/fbchatterms.aspx>

**3.** You can also report someone who may be suicidal to Facebook [directly here](#) and on Instagram, you can click the 'three dots' button on the bottom right corner of every post, report the image

as inappropriate, and choose the reason why. Facebook and Instagram have dedicated teams committed to reviewing reported content as quickly as possible, and in some cases will provide extra resources for those in need. **However**, if the person has made an explicit threat of suicide, you should call 911 or a suicide hotline immediately.

#### ! REMEMBER TO:

- Listen without judgment, assumptions, or interruptions. Let them know that you believe what they are saying and take them seriously
- Know your limits and do not place yourself in physical danger – the best way to help is to connect your friend to a mental health professional.

*No matter what, you shouldn't be embarrassed or worried about offending or upsetting your friend. Helping your friend may take some courage, but it is always worth the effort to support their health and safety.*

#### BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Instagram



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION ON FACEBOOK, GO TO:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/suicideprevention>

FOR RESOURCES AND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT REPORTING A POST YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ON INSTAGRAM, GO TO THE INSTAGRAM HELP CENTER:

<https://help.instagram.com/>

select Privacy and Safety then Reporting Something and then Self harm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND HOW TO HELP YOURSELF OR A FRIEND, VISIT:

[www.halfofus.com](http://www.halfofus.com)

This guide, while evidence based, is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to constitute medical advice or be a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.