

Befriending

**Having a conversation
with someone in distress**



**How do I know that
my friend needs help?**



Signs of Distress

- D** Deliberately avoiding others
- I** Increased irritability, restlessness, agitation, stress and anxiety
- S** Sending or posting moody messages on social media
- T** Talking about death or dying
- R** Reacting differently or gradually losing interest in things they used to like
- E** Eating more than usual or having a much reduced appetite
- S** Sleep pattern changes with difficulty falling asleep or oversleeping
- S** Slowing down of energy levels

If you notice any of these signs in yourself or your friends,

have a chat with your school counsellor or teacher

Or contact SOS 24-hour hotline at **1800-221-4444**

For Cyber wellness-related matters call **1800-612-3123** or email to **hello@help123.sg**



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Interpreting possible tell-tale signs

- Is there a change in **behaviour**?
- Are there **uncontrollable and intense negative feelings**?
- Is there **more than one** distress sign?
- How **often** has it been happening?
- Has it been happening over a **prolonged period** of time (e.g. more than 2 weeks)?

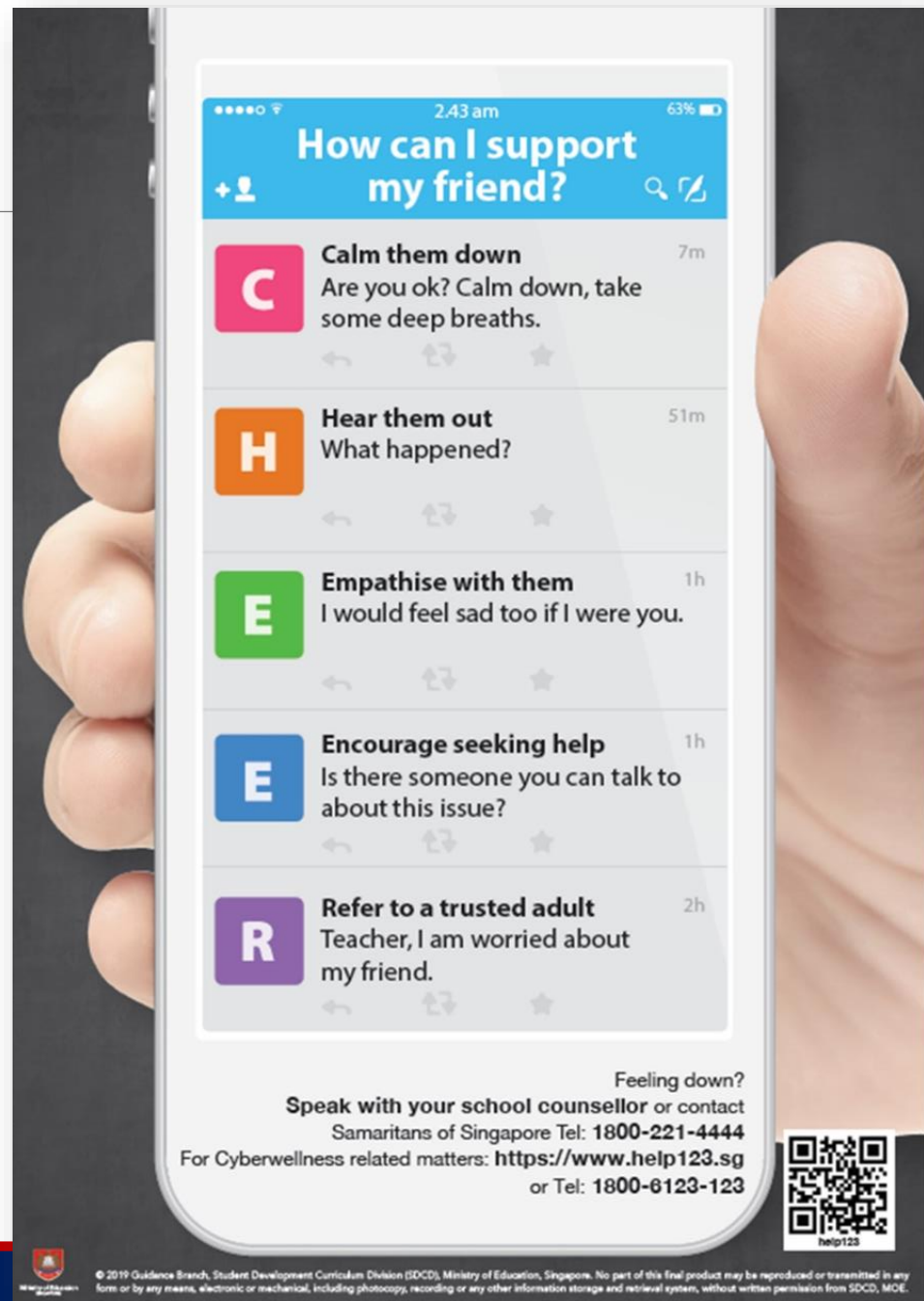
***It's okay to mistake the signs!
Better to err on the side of caution!***



How can I provide social-emotional support to my friend?



The CHEER model



Rationale for the CHEER model

Calm them down

- Help him to be in better control of his emotions
- In so doing, he is better able to share what is affecting him

Hear them out

- Ability to verbalise what is affecting oneself usually brings some form of relief
- In so doing, you will be able to understand his situation

Empathise with them

- Shows him that you are able to 'tune into' and understand his thoughts and feelings
- This shows that you care for him and what he is going through

Encourage seeking help

- You are not expected to have all the answers nor 'solve' his problem
- Encouraging him to seek help from a trusted adult or another peer also helps him to know he is not alone

Refer to a trusted adult

- This is when he is facing something that is complicated or severe
- Referring him to a trusted adult ensures he gets the help and support that he needs

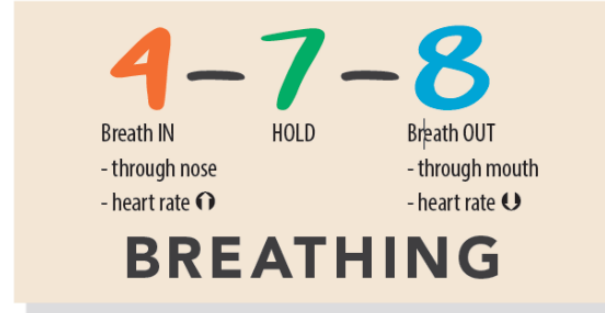


C – Calm them down



Calm them down

- Deep Breathing
- Muscle Relaxation
- Mental Relaxation
- Removing them from the situation
- Taking a Time-out



Palm Push

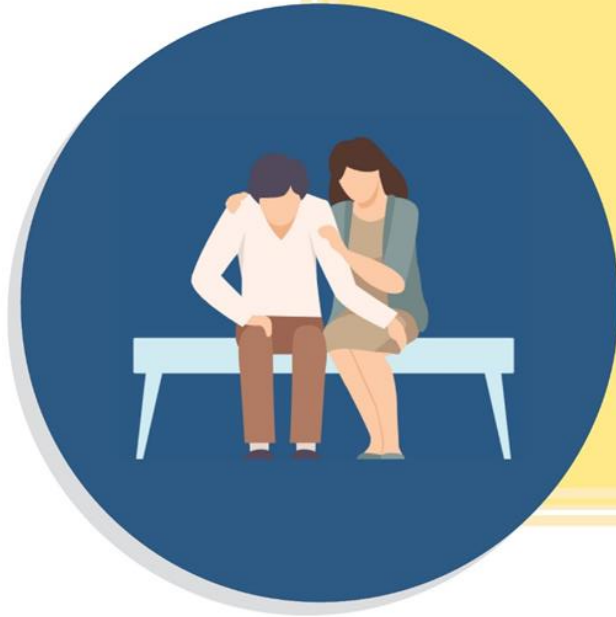


H – Listen Actively
**E – Respond with
Empathy**



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy

Interacting with others



Genuineness

Respect

Empathy

Warmth



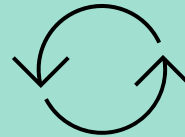
Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy



**Pay
attention**



**Withhold
judgement**



**Reflect
feelings**



Share



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy

S

O

L

E

R



Pay attention

Sit squarely at a comfortable distance and angle.	Open posture, with arms and legs uncrossed.	Lean forward from time to time. Look genuinely interested. Listen attentively.	Effective eye contact without staring.	Remain relatively relaxed.
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- ✓ Appropriate tone of voice (e.g. not loud or shrill, slightly lower pitched, slower, warm/pleasant tone)
- ✓ Appropriate responses (e.g. mmm, ok, uh-huh)
- ✓ Nodding in agreement where appropriate
- ✓ Smile to soften the look



Egan (1994)



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy



**Withhold
judgement**

**Invisible communication barriers
may hinder active listening.**

- Being impatient.
- Being quick to judge or jump to conclusions.
- Being distracted.
- Being too concerned with problem-solving.
- Over-identification and over-disclosure.
- Under-identification with the issue.



Over-identification

- When one over-identifies with the issue that the other person is facing. This can sometimes happen because the PSL has experienced something similar in the past.
- This can cause the PSL to possibly self-disclose more than necessary.
- In taking over the conversation, the focus then shifts from the student-in-need to the PSL instead. This may cause the student-in-need to feel that the PSL is not really interested in what he/she is going through.
- Sometimes, over-identification can also lead to the PSL experiencing negative emotions. The PSL may become affected by the issue and is then unable to support the student-in-need.

Under-identification

- When one cannot identify with the issue that the other person is facing. This usually happens because the PSL is either too young to have these life experiences or because the PSL is from a demographically different profile and has not encountered such a situation before.
- In such a situation, the PSL may find it difficult to empathise with the student-in-need.



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy



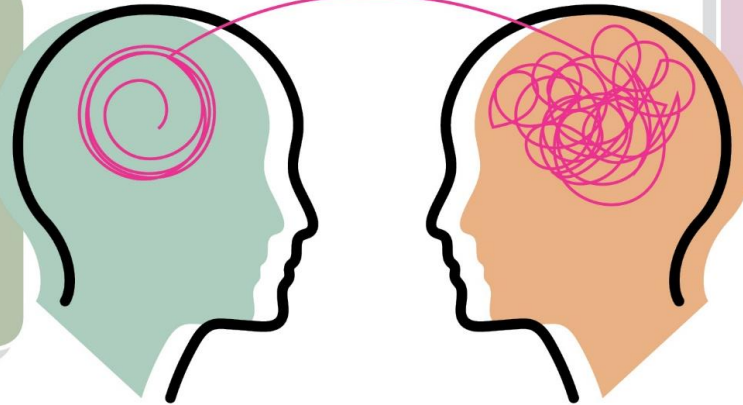
Reflect feelings

1. Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel.

2. We can see things from their point of view (also known as social perspective-taking) and imagine ourselves in their place.

EMPATHY

5. Empathy is also NOT about judging others or having pity on someone who is in distress.

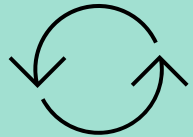


3. It is about putting ourselves in their shoes and feeling what they are feeling.

4. Empathy is NOT sympathy, where we feel sorry for someone and what he/she is going through.



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy



Reflect feelings

1

When we respond to the student-in-need using **tentative language** (e.g. you seem... it sounds like...), it shows that this is our impression of how the other person may be feeling.

Use of Tentative Language in Empathy

2

We provide the student-in-need then with the emotional space to accept, correct or elaborate. Only the student-in-need himself/herself knows precisely how he/she feels.

3

Our role is to try to understand the student-in-need.

4

When we use tentative language to respond, we proceed in a way that is respectful and honours the other person's feelings and experiences.

5

This is also called '**validating**' the person, when we seek to learn about the person and his/her experiences, understand how he/she feels and then express acceptance of this emotional experience.

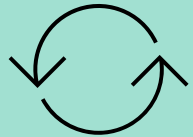
You seem...



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy

Useful Sentence Forms

- It seems like _____.
- It's almost like _____.
- You felt _____ because _____?
- From what you said, it sounds like _____.
- It sounds like you weren't just _____, but also _____.

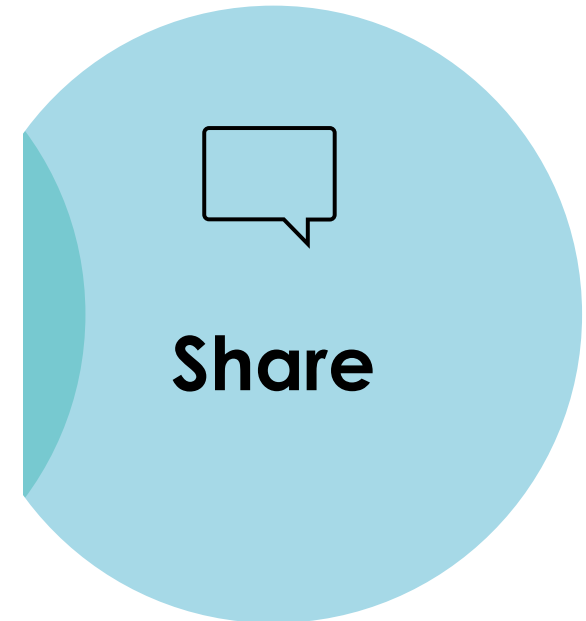


**Reflect
feelings**



Listen Actively & Responding with Empathy

- After gaining a clearer understanding of his troubles, the conversation now shifts to **problem-solving**
- Share your thoughts and experiences, offer suggestions, but **don't dictate a solution**
- He will feel more confident and eager if he thinks through the options and owns the solution.



E – Encourage Seeking Help



Encourage Seeking Help

- Beyond your ability/ responsibility
- Widen support network
- Self-care

You are not expected to have all the answers nor 'solve' his problem!



Encourage Seeking Help

Who?

- Trust
- Relationship
- Safe
- Useful Questions
 - *"Have you told _____ about this?"*
 - *"Is there anyone else you trust with this?"*



Encourage Seeking Help

Encountering resistance:

"I can handle this myself."

- "How have you been coping? I think everyone needs help from time to time."

"I don't want to burden others"

- "I don't think the people who care about you feel that way, when you support people you care about, do you think they're a burden?"

"I am ashamed of this, I don't want anyone to know."

- "There are others who have struggled with _____ as well, and they have gotten the help they needed."

Come from a place of wanting to understand



R – Refer to a Trusted Adult



Risk and Referral

- Weighing the pros and cons
- Significant change from the norm
- Identify the risk level
 - Extent (Physical/ Emotional)
 - Severity
 - Frequency



A possible risk classification

- **Low (green):** Most likely able to help/support in your capacity
- **Medium (orange):** Try to help/support, but consider referral if it is not within your means
- **High (red):** Immediate referral to teacher or counsellor

Issues in boy-girl relationship	Frequent absence	Being abused (physical, sexual, or emotional)	Thinking about suicide
Eating disorder	Victim of bullying	Family problem	Self-harm
Anger and being aggressive	Academic stress and anxiety	Cannot adjust to changes	Internet addiction



Criteria to identify Risk Level

When there is harm involved (e.g. someone is hurt physically or emotionally) and external help is needed which is beyond the scope of the PSL. This can be either self-inflicted or inflicted by someone else.

EXTENT OF HARM



Examples:

- ◆ Physical or psychological abuse
- ◆ Bullying (includes cyber-bullying)
- ◆ Self-inflicted harm (includes suicide ideation and attempt)
- ◆ Feeling unwell / Being injured and needing medical attention

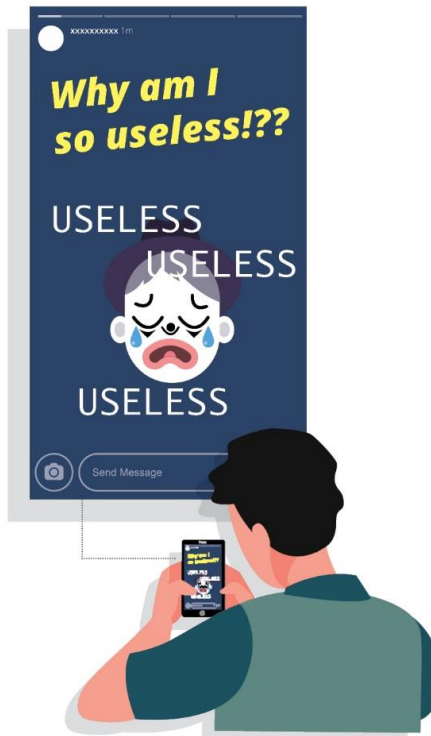


Criteria to identify Risk Level

When the issue becomes more severe or if the student-in-need is experiencing more intense and negative feelings, this could be a sign that the student-in-need may need further help or support.

It is also important to note how long the student has been experiencing the situation. When the duration is longer (e.g. more than 2 weeks), the level of risk increases.

SEVERITY



Examples:

- ◆ The student is much more easily agitated now as compared to before.
- ◆ Social media posts are more negative in outlook as compared to earlier posts.
- ◆ Previously, there was only small marks, but now, there are more and larger marks on the student's body.
- ◆ In the past, the student only looked a bit withdrawn and down, but now, the student looks unkempt and has lost significant weight.
- ◆ The student is spending more hours gaming online and into the early hours of the morning.



Criteria to identify Risk Level

If the student is experiencing difficulties on a more frequent basis, or if the PSL observes that the frequency of negative feelings has increased, the PSL may want to alert a trusted adult to get additional support for the student-in-need.

FREQUENCY



Examples:

- ◆ The student is absent from or late for school more frequently as compared to before.
- ◆ The student falls asleep in class more often unlike in the past.
- ◆ The student has more frequent emotional outbursts.
- ◆ Quarrels at home are becoming more frequent as compared to previously.



Managing Confidentiality

- Accompany through the process
- Share your feelings and rationale
- "Hey _____, I'm concerned about you and I want you to be well, I think _____ can really help, could we go speak to him/her sometime?"



References

- PSL Training Package (Sec) by MOE Student Development Curriculum Division (SDCD)
- <https://medium.com/live-your-life-on-purpose/how-to-cultivate-the-silent-art-of-active-listening-3e2fd81e4334>
- <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/coaching-others-use-active-listening-skills/>

