Handling Emotion

It’s normal to encounter frustration and setback at different life stages, which may lead to emotional instability. Some of us can rebound to a balanced state by self-regulation after awhile; some of us may need longer time or others’ assistance; while some of us may need to seek professional support in order to get over the emotional turmoil.

Does your friend experience the following situations?

- Cry a lot and could not concentrate. Peer counselling does not seem to help and the situation lasts for months.

- At 3am, my friend calls and says, “I can no longer tolerate this pain. No one can help me. I want to disappear from this world!”

- My friend shares the troublesome romantic relationship which drags him/her down.

- My friend rejects all invitations and refuses to go out or socialize with other people.

Walk with your friends

How to help your emotionally disturbed friends? To lend a helping hand, you should first identify signs of mental disturbances. Below are some useful tips! If your friend experiences these symptoms for more than two consecutive weeks, there are reasons to concern about his/her mental wellness. It may be time for us to offer our support.
Signs of mental disturbances

- Lose temper easily and feel distress
- Low appetite, and low energy level
- Difficult to concentrate
- Difficult to fall asleep
- Does not like to make contact with people
- Seek emotional support

Level of disturbance

Nild
- Experience strong setback and a spate of impediments
- Disturbances in diet and sleep disturbance
- Suffer from somatic diseases, e.g. headache, chest pain, stomachache, and palpitating heartbeat
- Lose interest in routine activities, hobbies and studies, etc
- Feel exhausted and cannot maintain daily routine
- Disconnect with social contact
- Do not pay attention to personal hygiene and appearance
- Slow or unstable in motor action
- Act aggressively or violently
- Experience self-blame and self-derogation
- Emotionally confused
- Feel helpless and hopeless
- Abuse alcohol and drugs

(Problems are transient; may last for several hours to a few days)

Moderate
- Feel desperate
- Express suicidal thoughts directly through articles, lyrics or songs
- Abandon precious items
- End a long and important relationship
- Indicate a wish to disappear

(Problems exist for two consecutive weeks or longer)

Severe
- Do’s
  - Listen actively
  - Accept his/her feelings
  - Show your understanding directly to make him/her feel supported
  - Encourage him/her to participate in more social gatherings or provide practical help in daily life
  - Invite or accompany him/her for a walk, go shopping, watching movies or exercising
  - Be calm, objective, positive and open-minded to explore problems and solutions
  - Respect his/her needs and values
  - Encourage him/her to seek professional help

- Don’ts
  - Impose your own values and opinions
  - Criticize his/her thinking

(Problems exist for two consecutive weeks or above)

How to help

Do’s
  - Listen patiently
  - Talk to him/her and offer encouragement
  - Be understanding and discuss solutions together

Don’ts
  - Judge and criticize
  - Neglect his/her feelings

Seek professional help

It may be difficult to rely on personal effort to help someone with severe emotional disturbance. Other than keeping calm, offering active listening & emotional support and acceptance, you should encourage your friend to seek professional help, e.g. from counsellors, medical doctors, psychologists or social workers etc. In addition, you can help him/her to collect relevant information regarding the professional services, or even accompany him/her to seek these services.

You also need support

While giving support to your friends, you should also pay attention to your own emotional condition. Sometimes, your distressed friends may have some unreasonable requests or behaviors. As a response, you may feel exhausted, helpless and even blaming yourself for not doing enough. However, you should acknowledge your limitations and that you have already offered your best. While you are helping your friends, you can also seek advice from your family, close friends and professionals. If possible, you should try to contact the family of the person concerned to ensure his/her safety, as well as to reduce your pressure.

Seeking Help at CUHK

Office of Student Affairs
Student Counselling & Development Service 3943 7208
College Dean of Students’ Office
Chung Chi College 3943 6990
New Asia College 3943 7609
United College 3943 7575
Shaw College 3943 7363

University Health Service
Security Unit (Emergency Number) 3943 6422
3943 7999

Seeking Help at CUHK

Community Resources

Organizations
- The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups
- Youth Counselling Centre "Youthline"
- Suicide Prevention Services
- Social Welfare Department Hotline
- The Samaritans Befrienders Hong Kong
- Multilingual counselling service

Service hours
- 2:00 pm–2:00 am (Mon–Sat)
- 24 hours
- 24 hours
- 24 hours

General enquiries
- 3943 1406
- 3943 1504
- 2382 0000
- 2389 2222
- 2777 8899
- 2343 2255

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