

## What To Do When You Believe A Friend Needs Help

from the American Counseling Association

We human beings are social creatures. We all have relationships with many other people in our busy lives. The relationships that matter most are those we have because we want to have them. They are people we truly care about, but that very act of caring can sometimes pose relationship problems.

There may be times when we find something troubling about how a friend is behaving. In such cases, we may struggle over whether to share our opinion with this person out of fear of jeopardizing the relationship, even when the "friend" is a spouse or other close relative.

Is it possible to approach that person with our concerns and to do it in a way that minimizes the chance of hurting the relationship?

One way is to use a "caring confrontation," a "one - two" approach.

It starts by making sure you're in a private place and that the conversation is only between the two of you. You begin by describing the behavior that concerns you. You want to be objective and offer facts, rather than simply personal opinion. You might say something like, "I noticed you seem short-tempered at work lately," rather than "You sure are getting crabby and I don't like it."

It also helps to make your description positive, rather than negative and accusatory. Rather than saying "You sure are depressed these days," it's just as easy to say, "You don't seem to be quite as happy now."

The second part of this "one - two" approach is to ask whether your friend agrees with your observation and to offer an invitation to discuss it.

This "one - two" approach provides an invitation for the friend to talk without positioning you as an authority trying to "fix" the problem. You may find you've opened up your friend's eyes to something about which he or she was unaware, or your friend may have an explanation totally unrelated to your original thoughts.

If your friend does verify your concern, simply talking out the problem may help. However, there may be serious issues that would benefit from professional help. If you think a professional counselor could assist, make that observation in a positive way.

Your goal is not to be confrontational, but to give your friend the encouragement and support he or she needs to get professional help and get on with a positive life.

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words: 396