

What makes a good friend?

Having good friends is really important to your happiness. Figure out the signs of a good friend, and learn tips for how to be there for your own.

Why good friends are so important

A lot of research has been done looking into the benefits of friendship, and the research has found exactly what you might expect. It turns out that the better quality relationships you have; the more likely you are to be happy. Therefore it's good for your happiness to be a great friend to someone and to have a group of good friends supporting you. But it can be hard to pinpoint exactly what makes a good friend.

Signs of a good friend

Friends will come and go in your life, but more important than how long a friendship lasts, is that a good friend will love you for who you are. The way you can tell the sign of a good friend is by looking at the actions they take – big and small – that show they care.

Some common signs of a good friend include

- > *someone who will support you no matter what*
- > *someone you can trust and who won't judge you*
- > *someone who won't put you down or deliberately hurt your feelings*
- > *someone who is kind and has respect for you*
- > *someone who will love you because they choose to, not because they feel like they should*
- > *someone whose company you enjoy*
- > *showing loyalty*
- > *being trustworthy and willing to tell you the truth, even when it's hard*
- > *someone who can laugh when you do*
- > *someone who is willing to stick around when things get tough*
- > *someone who makes you smile*
- > *someone who is there to listen*
- > *someone who will cry when you cry*

How to be a good friend

If you want to do all or many of the things listed above for someone you care about, you're already a good friend. It's also common though, to not know exactly what to do or say to be there for someone. Some practical things you can do to be there for a friend include:

Listen. Listening is so important not to underestimate, but it can be hard to do. The best way to listen is to try and understand the situation from your friends' point of view. If you aim to do this, you'll naturally find yourself beginning to ask the right sort of questions and they will appreciate

This can help if...

- > *you're not sure about a friendship*
- > *you don't know what to do or say to a friend*
- > *you want to figure out what a good friend is*

Take action...

- > *Compare you and your friends to the above list of traits*
- > *Write down what type of friend you'd want and like to be*
- > *Read real-life stories of friendship on ReachOut.com*

having someone who really cares about how they feel and what they're going through. You don't have to have all the answers, and you shouldn't assume your friend wants advice – they might just want to talk so that they can work out what they're going to do themselves.

Ask them what they need. If you're worried about someone and you want to be there for them, just ask them what they need– that way you know what they find helpful during tough times, and you can be there in a way that's most useful to them.

Get physical. Smiles and hugs are a great way to show friends that they're not alone, that you're there for them, and that they are important.

Keep in touch. Even if you guys aren't nearby each other, making an effort to keep in touch through facebook, emails, texts and calls will show your friend you are there for them

Tell them how you feel. You don't have to make a big deal of it all the time but sometimes there are moments where letting someone know that they're important to you through something you say, can make a big difference to how someone is feeling.

Get the facts. If your friend has a medical condition, or a mental health issue, a good way to offer support is to learn about what they've been diagnosed with. Taking an interest in what they're going through shows that you care, and that you're planning to stick around no matter what's going on.

Be willing to make a tough call. If you think the safety of your friend is at risk, you might need to act without their consent and get help (see the sidebar for where you can seek help). It can be a hard choice particularly when you're worried about their reaction, but remember that you are acting because you care and you don't want them to be hurt.