

MODULE 4.6

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FRIENDS

TEACHER GUIDE

Module 4.6

Looking after your friends

Introduction

The 'Module 4.6 Looking after your friends' teacher guide is designed to assist you to prepare and facilitate student activities using the MindMatters module 4.6, which can be found at www.mindmatters.edu.au. The MindMatters modules contribute to the ongoing MindMatters journey of improving the mental health of students by building a whole school approach.

This teacher guide consists of numerous learning activities to use with a group of students, and is to be used in conjunction with the 'Looking after your friends' student handout. The activities can be covered using a flexible approach determined by your individual school context and do not need to be considered as lesson plans.

Implementing MindMatters as a whole school approach requires the active participation of the whole school community, including students.



Objective

Students will:

- develop an understanding of the knowledge and skills for initiating conversations with peers they are worried about.

Outcomes

Students will:

- have a hopeful and helpful orientation towards their role supporting peers who are experiencing problems with their mental health
- be able to demonstrate strategies for helping a friend they are worried about
- be able to describe pathways to accessing adult support in their community
- be able to identify self-care strategy.

Key messages

- Friends and classmates are important people who can help you to have good mental health.
- There are things that all of us can do to look after each other.
- There are times when students might need extra adult help when supporting someone to improve their mental health.
- Knowing what support is available can help you feel confident when supporting a friend, and looking after yourself.



Prepare

Before you begin facilitating a student session, undertake the following steps:

1. Familiarise yourself with the student handout, the online animation and any background reading and references.
2. Decide which activities you will include and how much time you will aim to spend on them.
3. Check that your school allows access to YouTube. If not, speak to your IT team to get access.
4. Select a physical environment conducive to active learning – students sitting in discussion groups with room to move.
5. Organise any materials needed for activities.
6. Organise copies of the student handout.

You might also like to:

1. Speak with your local MindMatters project officer about extra hints or support for facilitating the student activities.
2. Ask the school librarian or resource centre person to gather together existing and relevant learning resources for use during the session/s.
3. Consider the range of beliefs that may be relevant to the module you are facilitating – issues, students, the school, the local community.

Overview

Activity	Materials needed
Introduction a) Develop an agreement for working together and address 'housekeeping' essentials b) What's this about?	Whiteboard or poster paper, markers or post it notes Page 3 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
1. Being a good friend	Pages 4 and 5 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout, animation 'Looking after your friends'
2. Looking after yourself	Page 6 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
3. Noticing what's going on	Page 7 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout, whiteboard and marker
4. Panel video	Video 'The MindMatters Panel', page 8 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
5. Starting a conversation	Pages 9 and 10 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
6. Helpful ideas on having a conversation	Page 11 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
7. Listening skills	Pages 12 and 13 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout, two chairs
8. Following up	Pages 14 and 15 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
9. Tricky questions	Pages 16 and 17 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout
10. Looking after yourself	Pages 18 and 19 of 'Looking after your friends' student handout



MATERIALS:

- 'Looking after your friends' student handout.
[DOWNLOAD AND PRINT](#)
- Whiteboard or poster paper.
- Markers or post it notes.



PURPOSE: To create a safe learning environment so that all students can participate in the activities in a respectful way. To make expectations clear to ensure all students can contribute their views and ideas. To encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and be accountable to peers.

Introduction

a) Develop an agreement for working together

Instructions:

1. Ask students to brainstorm and share ideas about how they wish to work during these activities.
2. Individuals can write suggestions on post it notes or the teacher can record suggestions on whiteboard or poster paper.

Here are some examples for agreements for a successful session:

- listen to each other
- respect different perspectives
- share only what you are comfortable sharing
- confidentiality and privacy aspects are to be remembered
- students have the right to pass
- engage in one conversation at a time
- share airspace.

Debrief: Talk to the group about how negotiating group agreements takes time and is an important part of every session. It helps to create a safe and supportive environment, which is a key factor protecting us when we are sharing information about wellbeing. A safe learning environment also enables open discussion for us all. Emphasise the importance of looking after one another as well as ourselves. It is OK to seek help if you feel uncomfortable at any time. This applies to both staff and students.

▼ ACTIVITY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ▼



Introduction

b) What's this about?

Read through this section on page 3 of the student handout with the students, noting that our friends are important to us and can be very supportive of us just as we can be supportive of them. Explain that the activities you are about to undertake with them will explore each of these aspects further.



MATERIALS:

- 'Looking after your friends' student handout.
[DOWNLOAD AND PRINT](#)
- Whiteboard or poster paper.
- Markers or post it notes.



PURPOSE: To create a safe learning environment so that all students can participate in the activities in a respectful way. To make expectations clear to ensure all students can contribute their views and ideas. To encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and be accountable to peers.



MATERIALS:

- 'Looking after your friends' animation.
[VIEW ON MODULE PAGE](#)
- Pages 4 and 5 of the student handout.



PURPOSE: To debunk the idea that young people need to be more than themselves in being there for a friend. To set the tone that this session is about the simple and friendly things you can do without trying to solve your friend's problems. To provide a conceptual link to the animation.

1. Activity 1: Being a good friend

Instructions:

1. Explain in this session we will have the opportunity to build our skills of being a good friend and to explore how we can look out for our mates if they are having a tough time. There will be a number of activities and we will watch a couple of videos.
2. Ask the question 'What do you think makes a good friend?' and allow students to share their understandings of friendship.
3. Direct students to pages 4 and 5 of the student handout. Ask them to read the *SuperFriend* comic. Mention that *SuperFriend*'s heart is in the right place but he doesn't seem to understand that being a good friend doesn't mean solving people's problems.
4. Invite students to write their own *SuperFriend* comic showing another well-meaning but probably unhelpful piece of *SuperFriend* advice. Allow only a few minutes for this activity and have the students present some of their *SuperFriend* scenarios to the class.
5. Show the animation 'Looking after your friends'. Ask students for points mentioned in the animation that made them think of any other things that make a good friend.

Debrief: We don't need to be like *SuperFriend* and try to fix everything to be a good friend. By noticing when our friends seem different, checking in with them and listening to what's going on for them we can be a big help. Sometimes that's enough and we can do it on our own, but sometimes it can be good to get help from an adult as well.



2. Activity 2: Looking after yourself

Instructions:

1. Direct students to page 6 of the student handout.
2. Explain to the students that this series of activities is about looking after our friends. Before we go on with the rest of the activities, it's important to remember that it can be stressful to be worried about a friend and it's important to look after ourselves as well.
3. Read out the tips for looking after yourself on page 6 of the student handout.
4. Ask the students:
 - 'What are the normal things that keep you happy and healthy?'
 - 'Can you think of any other ways to make sure you don't get overwhelmed when helping a friend?'

Debrief: It can be stressful to be worried about a friend so it's important to know how we can look after ourselves as well.



MATERIALS:

- Page 6 of the student handout.



PURPOSE: To remind students to look after their own mental health.



3. Activity 3: Noticing what's going on

Instructions:

Note: For this entire activity, monitor behaviour in the group to ensure individuals are comfortable with the discussions. If individuals are uncomfortable provide the opportunity for them to talk to you after class.

1. Run as a whole class activity. Point out that friends are sometimes the first people to notice changes in each other before parents or teachers. This means they are in a great position to ask early if something is wrong.
2. Ask "What kind of changes might we notice in a person who is going through a rough patch?" Gather ideas and facilitate any discussion that might arise. You may find that writing these ideas on the board will provide a focus and a stimulus for further ideas. Provide suggestions of your own if you need to guide the tone. Some examples of behavioural changes are listed below.
3. Mention that changes don't necessarily have to be big or dramatic. If we know a person well, even the small changes to behaviour that we notice could indicate that something is not quite right.
4. Examples of behavioural changes include:
 - shutting everyone out and continually wanting to be alone
 - being extra sensitive to things that they would normally brush off
 - fighting a lot with family and friends
 - getting 'written off' at parties
 - not doing things that they used to enjoy (e.g. horse riding, playing footy)
 - missing lots of school
 - fighting frequently with friends or family
 - relying on drugs and alcohol.

Debrief: Remind students to follow their instincts, and if they have a feeling that something is not quite right with a friend, it probably isn't.

📄 MATERIALS:

- Page 7 of the student handout.
- Whiteboard and marker.

❓ **PURPOSE:** To highlight the simple message that friends are well-placed to notice changes in each other. To look at the types of behavioural and attitudinal changes that might indicate that there is a deeper problem. To link the two video pieces.



MATERIALS:

- Page 8 of the student handout.
- 'The MindMatters Panel' video.

[VIEW ON MODULE PAGE](#)

 **PURPOSE:** To hear from other young people about their experiences of supporting a friend. To get some advice on how to start a conversation with a friend you are worried about.

4. Activity 4: Panel video

Instructions:

1. Show the video 'The MindMatters Panel', which presents young people's experiences of helping a friend.
2. Ask the students to use the table on page 8 of the student handout to note the following in Ash's story of helping a friend:
 - What were the behavioural changes that Ash noticed in her friend? (quiet, withdrawn, snappy, not joining in at parties)
 - How did Ash start a conversation with her friend about these changes? (started talking about something else first)
3. Ask the group what they think of Ash's approach and what they might do differently.

Debrief: By being there as a friend we can be an important support for someone going through a tough time. However, it's important to know our own boundaries, to take care of ourselves and to get support from a trusted adult when we need it.



MATERIALS:

- Pages 9 and 10 of the student handout.

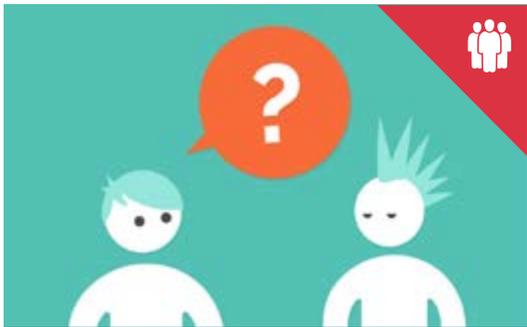
PURPOSE: To explore the thread in the video about starting a conversation with a friend.

5. Activity 5: Starting a conversation

Instructions:

- Elicit any general feedback or impressions from the class about the video.
- Ask specifically what people noted about Ash's story.
- Ask the class what else they picked up about starting a conversation. They might remember things like:
 - boys may like to throw in bits of personal information over a sport game
 - girls may like to talk about other issues first.
- Mention that these are generalisations and that we probably have a pretty good idea of the conditions that would be comfortable for our friends to speak openly.
- Continue to say that if we notice some changes in our friends and want to ask them how they are going, it is a good idea to think about where and how to have this conversation – sometimes a little bit of planning will achieve better results.
- Direct students to pages 9 and 10 of the student handout. Ask students to work in small groups and discuss the best combination of conditions for having a conversation with a friend about how they are going.
- Allow around five minutes for small group discussions then come back together as a large group and share ideas.
- Mention that the optimal conditions could be different depending on the situation, and there are sometimes multiple options. Ask students if they would suggest any variations on the ideas in the student handout.

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MATERIALS:

- Pages 9 and 10 of the student handout.

PURPOSE: To explore the thread in the video about starting a conversation with a friend.

9. After the activity, ask the question: “What if your friend comes to you for help? How does this change how you have a conversation with them?” Encourage ideas around this question. Point out that they can always arrange a better time and place if the current time and place is not suitable.

Debrief: Having a conversation with a friend about whom we are worried, can be a great way to let them know we care. Doing some thinking about how and when to check in with them can help set up both friends for a positive experience. There is no one right way to have a conversation with a friend, and it might not end up going as you planned. The important thing is to check in with your friend as soon as you can.

**MATERIALS:**

- Page 11 of the student handout.



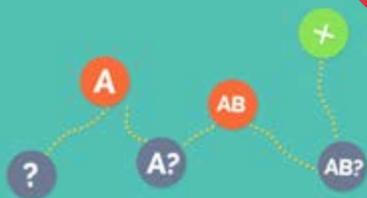
PURPOSE: To provide students with some helpful guidelines for having a conversation with a friend they are worried about.

6. Activity 6: Helpful ideas on having a conversation

Instructions:

1. Run through the list of helpful ideas on page 11 of the student handout. Mention they can refer back to this list for guidance if they ever find themselves worried about a friend.
2. Encourage any feedback from the class in regard to:
 - a) whether these guidelines would be the right approach
 - b) offering other suggestions for how to check in with a friend they are worried about.
3. It would be useful for students to be able to reflect upon the guidelines discussed in this activity when they want to have a conversation with a friend. For this reason it's suggested students keep their handouts from this session so that they can refer to them at an opportune time.

Debrief: Mention that one of the best things you can do when you are having a conversation with a friend is to be a good listener.



MATERIALS:

- Pages 12 and 13 of the student handout.
- Two chairs.

 **PURPOSE:** To learn about listening skills. To practise listening skills.

7. Activity 7: Listening skills

Instructions:

Are you listening?:

1. Direct students to page 12 of the student handout.
2. Ask for a volunteer from the class to help you demonstrate these skills. You and the student sit down on chairs in front of the class and face each other.
3. Explain to the student that you are going to talk about good listening skills, and as you mention each one, you would like them to use that skill. Tell the class that the skills you are going to demonstrate are listed in the student handout. Use the following content as a guide:

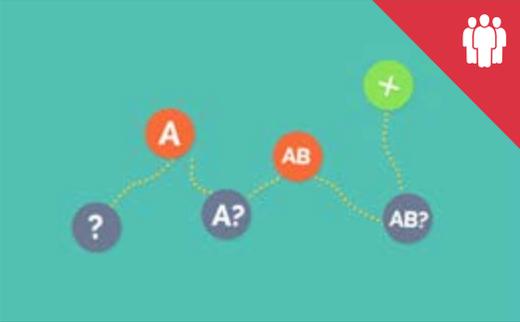
“It may be obvious, but one of the most important things you can do as a listener is pay attention. You can show you are paying attention by using non-verbal cues such as:

- nodding your head in agreement
- maintaining eye contact
- using appropriate facial expressions (e.g. smiles, frowns, grimace)
- sitting up straight
- leaning towards speaker
- not crossing your legs and arms.

Another technique you can use is called active listening. Active listening is a way of showing you understand what is being said. Summarise key points in your own words at regular intervals. For example you can say “So what you are saying is...” and then restate what you just heard.

(Pause for the student to summarise that point)

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MATERIALS:

- Pages 12 and 13 of the student handout.
- Two chairs.

PURPOSE: To learn about listening skills. To practise listening skills.

Also try asking open ended questions. These are questions that start with how, what or why to draw out more information.

(Pause for the student to ask an open ended question)

The last important thing to remember when you are listening well is not to give your own opinions or advice during the conversation – unless your friend specifically asks you, of course. This is their chance to speak and communicate their thoughts. Don't stop that by telling them what they should think."

Listening practice – optional activity:

1. Read through the instructions on page 13 of the student handout.
2. Break the class into groups of three and ask students to have three one-minute conversations, each time changing role between interviewer/listener, person being interviewed and observer.
3. Come back together as a large group. Ask students 'When you were being interviewed did you feel listened to? Why?'

Debrief: Being a good listener is an important part of being a good friend.



MATERIALS:

- Pages 14 and 15 of the student handout.

PURPOSE: To provide an opportunity for students to reflect on the complexity of the way people may respond and what they can do.

8. Activity 8: Following up

Instructions:

1. Direct students to pages 14 and 15 of the student handout.
2. Explain that having a conversation with a friend probably isn't going to fix things straight away – although it's a great first step.
3. Allow students two to three minutes to look through the information on 'following up'.
4. Ask the group what they think of the diagram. Do they think it looks realistic? Would they add any steps?

Debrief: Checking in with a friend we're worried about won't necessarily fix things right away but is a great first step. People can take time to recover from a rough patch. One of the best things we can do is keep up our normal activities with them. It can be hard to know when to step back from supporting a friend, but if we are feeling overwhelmed, frustrated or angry it can be better for our friend and for us to have some breathing space.



MATERIALS:

- Pages 16 and 17 of the student handout.



PURPOSE: To give students the opportunity to discuss questions that may present as dilemmas for them.

9. Activity 9: Tricky questions

Instructions:

Note: For this entire activity, monitor behaviour in the group to ensure individuals are comfortable with the discussions. If individuals are uncomfortable, provide the opportunity for them to talk to you after class.

1. Break the class into three groups. Explain that they have five minutes to discuss one of three tricky questions on pages 16 and 17 of the student handout. Explain that the group needs to present their conclusion to the rest of the class so a presenter and note-taker needs to be chosen for each group.
2. As the groups are discussing, circulate and add ideas where required. Use the following question notes as a guide:

- *What if you don't feel comfortable having a discussion with your friend? Is it OK to arrange someone else, like the school counsellor or a teacher to have that talk? How will your friend feel?*

Peers may be the first to identify that a friend is in distress or having difficulty coping. That's why it is important that all students understand the importance of passing on their concerns to a counsellor or other adult who can arrange for ongoing support. Schools can promote the message to all students that getting help for a friend is not a breach of loyalty; a good friend cares and supports. When a student does pass on concerns, they too can be offered debriefing and support in case the task itself causes distress.

- *What if your friend tells you a secret that you think needs to be shared with a teacher, counsellor or other adult? If you tell, is it a breach of trust?*

It is important that young people are made aware that some secrets are too harmful to keep, and that involving a helpful adult may be necessary. If you are feeling bad about a secret you are keeping on behalf of a friend, it is usually a good sign that it is not a good secret to keep. If your friend is in danger, or you believe someone else is in danger, ask an adult who you trust for help.

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MATERIALS:

- Pages 16 and 17 of the student handout.



PURPOSE: To give students the opportunity to discuss questions that may present as dilemmas for them.

- *What if while talking to your friend you feel they should be talking with someone else, like a teacher or mental health professional? How do you tell them?*

Let your friend know that you want to support them. Ask if it would be OK if you suggest an idea. Let them know that there is other support available and that you will help them to get that support if they want your help, for example, by going to see the Student Wellbeing Coordinator together.

3. Bring everyone back together and ask the speaker from each group to summarise their discussion for the class. You can refer to the above notes when facilitating any discussions.
4. Ask the group “Where can you go in our school for support if you’re worried about a friend?” If students are unsure, this is a good opportunity to let them know about what supports are available at school for them (i.e. counsellor, teachers, year coordinator etc.).

Debrief: Sometimes you know something isn’t right with your friend but it’s not always easy to know what to do. It’s important to talk to an adult you trust if you’re not sure and remember that getting help for a friend isn’t a breach of loyalty. Done in a respectful way it is caring and is being supportive.



MATERIALS:

- Pages 18 and 19 of the student handout.

 **PURPOSE:** To remind students to look after themselves.

10. Activity 10: Looking after yourself

Instructions:

1. Direct students to pages 18 and 19 of the student handout.
2. As a final note, remind the students that when looking after our friends it's important to look after ourselves.
3. Ask if anyone remembers how the students in the panel felt about how helping a friend made them feel:
 - It made them feel good – weight being lifted
 - It made them feel stressed – sharing their friend's burden
4. Point out that because helping a friend can be both a relief as well as stressful, it's important to look after ourselves and know when to ask for help. Remind the students of the tips for looking after ourselves that were presented at the start of the activities.
5. Ask students to read through these tips again, and when they have finished have a look through the 'What next?' information on page 18 and the 'Sites and services' listed on page 19 of the student handout.

Debrief: Supporting a friend about whom you are worried doesn't mean solving all their problems. Checking in with them at a comfortable time, listening to them and keeping up your normal activities together is a great way to be supportive.

If you feel the issue isn't getting better or is too big for you to handle, it's a good idea to talk to an adult you trust and get some extra support for your friend and for yourself.

An excellent opportunity for students to access is the teen **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** course. It is a three and a half hour course for students in Years 10 to 12.

Information can be found at <https://mhfa.com.au/cms/teen-mhfa-course-information>.

MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools developed by *beyondblue* with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

See more MindMatters resources at www.mindmatters.edu.au