



Supporting a friend with mental illness What you can do to help them

August 2017



There's lots of talk at the moment about mental health, especially about what to do when someone's in crisis. And because 1 in 6 New Zealanders is diagnosed with a mental health disorder during their lifetime, chances are someone you know is quietly battling to maintain their own mental wellbeing.

There are many ways you can support someone who's been diagnosed with a mental health condition once they're receiving the right treatment.

Here are our top tips for supporting someone with a mental health condition:

1. Learn about their illness. If you know a bit about what causes mental illness it can help you understand and explain to others what the person is dealing with and why they can't just snap out of it.

2. Keep them connected with friends and their community. Staying connected with people is important for everyone's mental wellbeing.
3. Listen. Don't be afraid if you don't know what to say. Usually your friend just needs someone to listen to them and not pass judgement or offer advice.
4. Have realistic expectations. By understanding their condition, it can help you know what you can expect of them.
5. Offering practical help. Providing a meal, walking their dog or dropping their kids off at school can be a big help.

If you would like to understand more about mental health you might like to have a look at the following articles:

- [Your mental health](#)
- [Keeping mentally well](#)
- [Mental health & your body](#)
- [How to build resilience](#)
- [How mindfulness supports wellbeing.](#)

Remember to look after yourself, too. If you need to talk, you can phone or text 1737 anytime day or night to connect to free support from trained counsellors.

Your Health Navigators

General health roundup

[Looking for ways to boost your immunity?](#)

It can seem like you're constantly bombarded with the latest thing to boost your immunity, from echinacea to oregano, but the solution might be simpler than you think.



[Could vaping help you quit smoking?](#)

E-cigarettes are being used by some people to help them quit smoking. To work out whether they might help you, it's useful to know more about them.



[How to prevent meningitis](#)

Meningitis begins with flu-like symptoms and can quickly become life-threatening or cause a permanent disability. It's possible to prevent meningitis – find out how.



[Understanding IBD can help you manage it](#)

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) mainly describes two conditions that inflame your gut: Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Although there are no cures for these two conditions, there are treatments that can help relieve your symptoms.



Parenting puzzles solved

[How mindful parenting can change your life](#)

In this video, clinical psychologist Dr Chantal Hofstee talks about mindful parenting, including how learning about mindful parenting has changed how people parent.



[How to reduce the risk of listeria in pregnancy](#)

Most people are not harmed by listeria, but for pregnant women, older people and people with a lowered immunity, it can cause serious problems. Read about how to protect yourself.



[What mums should know about expressing](#)

Expressing milk allows you to keep feeding your baby breast milk if you are going to be separated from them or you can't breastfeed for other reasons.



Understanding your medicines

[Understanding anaesthesia](#)

Learn more about the different types of anaesthesia that can be used when you are having surgery or a procedure.



Health app review

[Mental health and wellbeing apps](#)

Our health app review team has looked at 6 apps for improving mental health. The [WellMind app](#) is aimed at people with common mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.



Video of the month

[The unspoken impact of dementia](#)

How we react and respond to people with dementia can make such a difference to creating a safe, friendly place for people with dementia and their families.



[Visit Health Navigator NZ for more health answers](#)

