



# BEING SUPPORTIVE AS A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND



*Distributed by the University Counseling Center at Florida State University*

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A family member or other loved one has been through a difficult experience. What can you do to ease the pain? Below are several suggestions for offering support and comfort during a trying time.

## ***Listen, listen, listen***

One of the most important needs after a critical incident is to talk about the event. It may be difficult for you to hear about, or you may get tired of hearing the same story, but talking can be a crucial part of your loved one's recovery. Be supportive and sympathetic. Try to avoid overreacting or pushing your loved one to talk. Your loved one needs to tell their story, not to be upset by your reaction. If your loved one tries to shield you from the event by refusing to talk about it, you obviously can't force them to talk. But you can encourage openness and listen to whatever else the person wants to say. Keep in mind that your loved one may not be ready to talk at this point, but let them know that you're there to support them in any way they might need.

## ***Encourage your loved one to maintain their routine***

After a crisis, emotions can run high. It's easy to rush into an impulsive decision, such leaving school, dropping courses, or ending relationships. While it may be difficult for your loved one to face their daily routine or everyday tasks, this may actually be the best way to recover from the crisis. Structure and the company of others can provide predictability, comfort, and security.

## ***Include your friends, family, and FSU community in the healing process***

Rely on your support system. Remember to utilize various avenues of support. Your loved one may be concerned about burdening others by reaching out, but company might be the exact type of support they need. Help them research the resources available to them at FSU, refer them to resources such as the University Counseling Center, University Health Services, Dean of Students office, and Victim Advocate Program.

## ***Take care of yourself***

You have your own responsibilities, and now you may also feel responsible for keeping your loved one from feeling too much strain. While it's important to be supportive, you also need some support yourself. Ask friends or family members for help, and don't be afraid to seek counseling for yourself. Remember to take care of basics such as eating nutritious meals, sleeping well, and engaging in physical activity.

## ***Enjoy the little things***

Take time out for you and your friends to enjoy the little things in life such as a walk out doors, spending time with a pet, or grabbing a bite to eat with a friend. Appreciating the little things won't make the pain go away, but it can help in the healing process. While it may be difficult to enjoy yourself at a time like this, it's important to strengthen your bond with the people you love and who care about you.