



PARK AVENUE SYNAGOGUE

8 Ways To Provide Emotional Support

Oftentimes the most supportive thing we can do when someone is going through a difficult time is to listen.

1. Reach out.

“I’ve been thinking about you,” “I wanted to check in with you,” “We can talk about anything you’d like.” You can also take a walk or do some other physical exercise together. Let the person know you will follow up in a few days or weeks.

2. Listen to validate, not minimize, feelings.

Paraphrase what they have said to confirm you understand how they feel. Thank them if they correct you. Saying things along the lines of “I can hear how painful this is for you” or “You’re having a really tough time” is supportive. Avoid saying “stay positive,” “everything happens for a reason,” or “it could be worse.”

3. Don’t try to fix or offer solutions.

If you’re not sure what someone is asking for, you can say, “I am here to listen, but if you would like help problem-solving, I’m happy to do that, too.”

4. Acknowledge you don’t know what to say.

“I wish I had the right words for you. I’m so sorry to hear that. I’m sending you lots of love. You were heard. I’m sorry that you’re hurting right now. I understand your perspective. I’m thinking of you. That sounds so hard. Do you want to tell me more? Can I give you a hug?”

5. Silence can be plenty.

Sometimes saying nothing speaks volumes. Silence can be uncomfortable, but when we don’t try to fill the space, it allows the other person to experience feelings more completely.



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6. Offer practical help.

The statement “let me know what you need” can be too general or overwhelming to someone struggling. Instead, offer to do something concrete, saying, “I’m stopping for groceries, what can I bring you?” or “I’d like to drop off dinner for you, does pizza at 7 p.m. sound OK?” or “I’d like to pick up the kids on Saturday at 1 p.m. so you have some time to yourself, let me know if that works for you.”

7. Breathing

If someone is having a panic attack or hyperventilating, you can use a grounding technique.

Box breathing: Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, and hold for 4 seconds. Repeat until the breathing regulates.

5-4-3-2-1 method: Ask them to name:

5 things they can see

4 things they can hear

3 things they can feel

2 things they can smell

1 thing they can taste

This helps focus on the body in the present moment. The exercise can be repeated as many times as necessary.

Ice bowl method: This technique engages the dive reflex, the physiological changes that take place when a mammal dives into



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water. It helps to reset and calm the nervous system when it is hyperaroused.

Fill a bowl with ice water and hold your breath while plunging your face into the water for 30 seconds, then take your face out and repeat the process. Or hold an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables, or take a cold shower, or splash cold water on your face.

Intense exercise: Strenuous activity, such as a few minutes of jumping jacks or pushups, can bring someone back into the body.

8. For professional help:

- Call or text 988, the 24/7 suicide and crisis lifeline.
- Crisis Text Line is an anonymous 24/7 texting service. You can start a conversation by texting GOT5 to 741741.
- If your or someone else's life is in danger, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.
- For confidential, non-emergency support or for help connecting to ongoing care, such as a support group or therapy, contact our social worker, **Suzanne Redlich**, at 212-369-2600 x105 or sredlich@pasyn.org.