

# How to handle situations when my friend or sibling is sad, angry or does dangerous things?



When children and teens go through difficult times or face problems, their behaviour can change.

**For example:**

- They start acting differently towards family members, friends, and others.
- They are snappier or quieter than usual.
- They take up unhealthy habits like drinking, smoking or even hurting themselves or others.
- They drop out of school or start engaging in petty crime.

**These changes can be a sign that they need help.**

Maybe they have not asked for support yet because they don't want to be a burden to anyone. Or they are afraid, ashamed, or simply don't know whom or how to ask.

**If you have noticed changes in the behaviour of your friend/sibling, the tips on the next pages can help you and them.**



**Your friend/sibling stopped talking to you and others, seems lonely, irritated or cries more than usual. They no longer join you in activities and spend their days in bed.**



Tell them that you have noticed that they have changed. You can say that you are a bit worried for them. Tell them that you care how they feel.

**You can ask for example:**

- You seem sad and worried.  
Can I do anything to help?
- You used to go out with me but now you no longer want to. Is there something you are struggling with?



Knowing that you want to understand what bothers them, can help your friend/sibling to open up and explain their problem.

It makes them realise that they are not alone.

**If they don't want to talk, don't push them. Give them time. What matters is that they know that you are there once they are ready.**



**Your friend/sibling  
has started to be mean,  
calls you names, and is  
aggressive and violent  
towards you and others.**



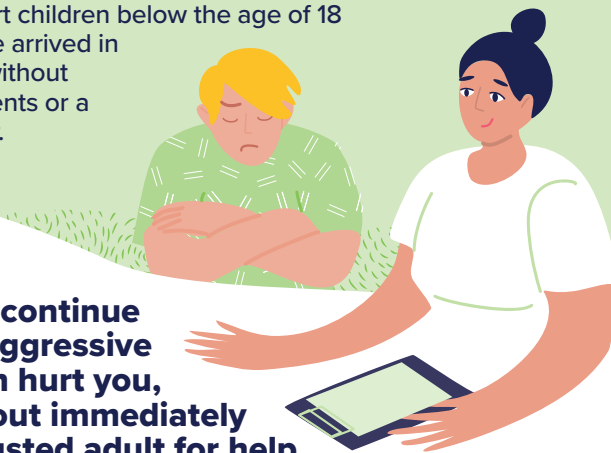
It is good to care but make sure you are not hurt in the process. Tell your friend/sibling that you understand their worries or why they are angry. But also point out that it is not fair to mistreat others, and that they must stop.

Mention that being aggressive does not make the situation better. It only hurts people and they will start turning away.

Suggest them to talk to someone who can help with their problems, for example a social worker, counsellor, or their guardian.

A guardian is a person who is appointed to support children below the age of 18 who have arrived in Europe without their parents or a caregiver.

**If they continue to be aggressive or even hurt you, reach out immediately to a trusted adult for help.**



**Your friend/sibling stopped going to school, hangs out with troublemakers, started to drink, smoke or use drugs. Maybe they are committing petty crimes, like stealing.**



When you notice such behaviour in your friend/sibling, you can mention that their actions are dangerous and might have serious consequences.

If they don't listen and their condition gets worse, you can talk to a counsellor or social worker and ask for advice.

**When young people feel lonely, sad or hopeless, they might start hanging out with bad people who promise fun and friendship and make them feel part of a cool group.**

Often these people take advantage of those who feel alone, insecure or hopeless and ask for risky 'favours' in return for their friendship.

Sometimes young people try to forget their worries by drinking or using drugs.

**Remember:**  
Your own safety always comes first!



**Your friend/sibling mentions that they do not see a future and that it would be best not to be alive anymore. Maybe they started hurting themselves by cutting their arms or legs. Or they abuse painkillers, sleeping tablets or other drugs.**



When you see your friend/sibling feeling hopeless and very sad, take it seriously. Show them that they are not alone. Be there and listen. Point out that they have managed a lot, are strong and can control their bad mood and sad feelings.

**Even in difficult times or when a problem seems too big to handle, you can always find hope and people who care, even if it might not look like that.**

Playing sports or talking to friends can help forget worries. Invite your friend/sibling to do something fun together.

Tell them to take one step at a time and to solve one problem at a time. Looking at all the challenges at once can otherwise feel overwhelming.

If they continue saying very serious things such as they want to end their life, share your concern, and tell them that you want them to seek help. You can volunteer to join them. If they say no, reach out to a trusted adult and ask for advice.



**You start to realise  
that the situation of  
your friend/sibling makes  
you feel bad, nervous,  
and worried.**



It can be difficult to see that your friend/sibling feels bad. Maybe your thoughts are all over the place, you can't stop thinking about their problems and take it all personally.

**Remember:**  
you can only  
help others if  
you yourself are  
safe and well.

**Stay healthy:** sleep enough, eat well, do activities that make you feel good like sports, playing with friends, reading or studying. Spend time with people who make you laugh and feel happy.





**Trust your feelings.  
You will know when it is  
time to speak out and ask  
for help for your friend,  
your sibling or yourself.**



If you realise that your friend/sibling is struggling with a very serious problem and other people make them feel bad and unsafe, ask a trusted adult for advice.

**Read the information leaflets** that you can find in the place where you live and check out notification boards. You will learn about support services that can be useful for you or your friend/sibling.

**Participate in information provision sessions.** If you do not get the answers to your concerns, ask the staff. They will try to answer your questions.

**Search online for support nearby.**

See which services are available and share this with your friend/sibling, particularly when they do not feel motivated or capable to search for themselves.



**Remember:** the staff working where you live will treat any information that you or your sibling/friend share with confidentiality.

This means that they will not tell anyone what you or your sibling/friend told them without your agreement. The only exception is if you or your friend/sibling are in immediate danger.

**The staff will do their best to advise you on the next steps to take to stay safe, protected and healthy.**

When you feel alone, reach out to a person you trust such as a parent, social worker, the manager of the place where you live, your guardian or legal counsellor, a doctor, nurse, psychologist, cultural mediator, community leader, religious leader, teacher, neighbour or a friend.

**Make a list with the names and contacts of the persons you trust.** This makes it easier and faster to seek their help when necessary.

Find out the working hours of the staff where you live and where their offices are located.

If you plan to seek support via a hotline or online, through social media or other apps, make sure that the platforms are trustworthy, and that their services are provided by real professionals.

**Always be careful about how much personal information you share online.**

Lastly, locate the closest hospital and police post in case of an emergency. These places can be important for you and your friend/sibling.



**Know that  
you are not  
alone!**

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2023

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged. For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EUAA copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

PRINT:

ISBN 978-92-9400-728-5

doi:10.2847/893444

BZ-09-22-583-EN-C

PDF:

ISBN 978-92-9400-727-8

doi:10.2847/799272

BZ-09-22-583-EN-N

#### Photo credits:

Cover page: ©Good Studio/stock.adobe.com; ©Natalia/stock.adobe.com, page 2: ©topvectors/stock.adobe.com, page 3: ©alex\_cardo/stock.adobe.com, page 4: Александра Гвардейце/stock.adobe.com, page 5: ©Anastasiia/stock.adobe.com, page 6: ©artbesouro/stock.adobe.com; ©Anastasiia/stock.adobe.com, page 7: ©alex\_cardo/stock.adobe.com, page 8: ©Larysa/stock.adobe.com, page 9: ©Flash concept/stock.adobe.com, page 10: ©Vector Juice/stock.adobe.com, page 11: ©Marina Zlochint/stock.adobe.com, page 12: ©Cienpies Design/stock.adobe.com, page 13: ©Natalia/stock.adobe.com, page 14: ©Hanna Syvak/stock.adobe.com.



Publications Office  
of the European Union

