

Supporting Someone You Love

FAQ for Loved Ones

1. What actually helps when someone I love is overwhelmed?

Often the most helpful things are simple: staying present, listening without jumping in to fix, and reflecting back what you hear ("It makes sense that you feel..."). Ask what they need instead of guessing.

2. What if I say the wrong thing?

You will not always get it perfect. What matters most is your willingness to repair. You can say, "I am not sure if that was helpful. I am learning how to support you better—can you tell me what you need right now?"

3. How is empathy different from fixing?

Fixing focuses on solving the problem quickly. Empathy focuses on understanding how the situation feels for them. People usually need empathy first, and only then are they ready to think about next steps or solutions.

4. What if I feel overwhelmed too?

Your nervous system matters as well. It is okay to take breaks, set boundaries, and get support for yourself. You can care deeply and still say, "I need a moment to steady myself so I can really be here with you."

5. How can I encourage them to get more help?

Avoid ultimatums when possible. Instead, stay grounded and kind: "You have been carrying so much, and you deserve more support than just me. Would you be open to looking at some options together—like a therapist, support group, or doctor?"

If you are ever worried about someone's immediate safety, reach out to local emergency services or crisis supports in your area.

"What to Say When..." Mini-Script Sheet

When they are overwhelmed or anxious

- "This is a lot, and it makes sense that you feel overwhelmed. I am here with you. We can take this one small step at a time."
- "Would it help if we tried a few slow breaths together, or do you just want me to sit with you?"

When they are angry with you

- "I can hear that you are really hurt and frustrated with me. It makes sense that you feel that way. I want to understand your experience better."
- "I might not see every detail the same way, but your feelings matter to me. Can you tell me what hurt the most?"

When they are blaming themselves

- "I hear how harsh you are being toward yourself. It makes sense that you are upset, and you also deserve some compassion right now."
- "If I were talking to a friend I love in this situation, I would tell them: _____ . Can we offer some of that kindness to you too?"

When they seem numb, shut down, or distant

- "I notice you seem far away. I do not want to pressure you, but I care and I am here when you feel ready to talk."
- "Would you prefer quiet company, a distraction, or some space on your own right now?"

When you cannot show up in the way they want

- "You are really important to me, and it makes sense that you are disappointed. Right now I do not have the capacity to do everything you are asking. Here is what I can offer today: _____."
- "I care about you and I also need to respect my own limits. Let us see if we can find a middle ground together."

You are not responsible for "fixing" the people you love. Your role is to walk alongside them with care, honesty, and boundaries that are sustainable for you both.