

A Quick Guide for Helpers

When talking to those in crisis, try to **PAUSE**, **LISTEN**, and **LINK**.

Is the student...

- Unsafe? Lacking anything urgent or basic?
- Having a serious distress reaction that requires intervention?
 - › Feeling overwhelmed to the point that they cannot function
 - › Expressing hopelessness
 - › Stuck in negative coping (drugs/alcohol, sleeping all day, neglecting basic hygiene)

If the answer is yes, these are the priorities. Connect them to appropriate resources at Harvard.

PAUSE

- **DO** let them talk.
DON'T pressure them to talk. Silence is okay.
- **DO** acknowledge the feelings and losses they tell you about.
DON'T judge their feelings or reactions.
- If appropriate, try a brief calming exercise together:
 - › Breathe slow and low (through your stomach). Focus on your breath.
 - › Slow down and ground yourself in the present moment by focusing on one of your senses. For example, focus on a sound you hear, the feel of your sweater between your fingers, or the pressure of your feet on the floor. Try counting all of the colors you see in the room.

LISTEN

- Give information.
 - › **DO** explain what you know. Keep it simple.
 - › **DON'T** make up information or give false reassurances.
- Help them to address basic needs and access services. This can include:
 - › Prioritizing their needs
 - › Outlining specific actions or steps
 - › Identifying people in their life who can help
- Help with coping. This can include:
 - › Encouraging them to consider how they coped with past difficult situations and affirming their ability to cope now.
 - › Encouraging them to use positive coping strategies that feel good to them (regular sleep, meals, and exercise, social connections, relaxing or pleasurable activities, expressing gratitude, routines, breaks from work and the news).

LINK

Don't forget...

1. **Take care of your needs— practical and emotional.**

Think about how much you are ready to help in this moment. Boundaries, breaks, and tending to your own coping are necessary and important. It is okay to not be available all the time.

2. **It is not your job to solve all of their problems.**

You are there to provide practical care and support, but never intrude.

3. **Check in with other helpers. Support each other.**

Acknowledge what you were able to do to help others, even in small ways.