

Support ALERT: See the Signs, Make the Time

This guide helps you notice when someone you know might be struggling — and shows you what to do to help. You don't need to be a doctor or a counselor. You just need to care and know the steps.

A

Awareness

L

Listen & Learn

E

Encourage Help

R

Refer

T

Take Time for Yourself



This guide is here to support you in caring for your mental health and supporting those you love. This will help you get started. Always be willing to learn more. More info and tools are found on [kellydholder.com](https://www.kellydholder.com).

Know the Signs

Sometimes people are hurting on the inside but don't say anything. Here are things to watch for. We call them **BRAVE-HOPE** signs:

Letter	Sign	What It Looks Like
B	Behavior Change	Acting very differently than usual
R	Restless Fatigue	Always tired, even after sleeping
A	Activities Withdrawal	Stops doing things they used to love
V	Visible Mood Swings	Angry, sad, or anxious more than usual
E	Employment Decline	Work performance gets worse
H	Habits Change & Hopelessness	Sleep or eating changes; talks about giving up
O	Obligations Neglect	Skipping work, family, or responsibilities
P	Personal Hygiene Neglect	Stops taking care of how they look
E	Excessive Substance Use	Drinking or using drugs more than before

A Real-Life Example

Riley is an intake specialist at a hospital. Lately, she seems different. Her manager Morgan notices she looks tired, skips lunch, gets easily irritated, and worries too much about making mistakes. When asked how she's doing, Riley just sighs and says "fine." Morgan decides it's time to talk.

Morgan noticed the **BRAVE-HOPE signs** in Riley. You can do the same for someone you know. Noticing is the first step to helping.



Notice

Pay attention to changes in how someone looks, acts, or talks.



Care

Let them know you see them and you care about how they're doing.



Act

Start a kind, private conversation. You don't need all the answers.

Listen & Learn


When you talk to someone who is struggling, the most important thing is to **really listen** — not to fix everything, just to understand. Here's how:

Good Listening Skills

- Ask open questions
- Check your understanding
- Be patient — don't rush
- Don't interrupt
- Find a private place to talk
- Use open, relaxed body language
- Sit alongside them, not across

Body Language Tips

- Make comfortable eye contact
- Keep your arms uncrossed
- Sit down, even if they're standing
- Don't fidget or look at your phone
- Show you are calm and safe

 The goal is to build trust, not to have all the answers.

What to Say (and What NOT to Say)

The words you choose really matter. Some things can make a person feel worse, even if you don't mean to hurt them.

Don't Say These

- "Just snap out of it."
- "Others have it worse than you."
- "You're overreacting."
- "It's all in your head."
- "Just think positive thoughts."
- "I know exactly how you feel."

Try Saying These

- "You don't seem like yourself. Is something going on?"
- "I'm here for you if you want to talk."
- "I can't imagine how hard things must be."
- "You can talk to me — no judgment."
- "I've noticed some changes and I'm worried about you."

- ✔ For substance use, try: "I care about you. I've noticed some signs that worry me. Would you like to talk about what's happening?"

Encourage Help & Healthy Coping

After listening, gently encourage the person to get support. You can also share healthy ways to manage stress. Here are some things you can say:

"No one can handle problems like this alone. Have you thought about talking to a counselor? I can help connect you with our Employee Assistance Program."

"Finding the right support could give you new tools when you feel overwhelmed. You deserve help just like you would for any health issue."

"Do you have healthy ways to decompress and relieve stress? Let's think of some together."



Deep Breathing



Exercise



Journaling



Nature Walks



Social Connection

Where to Get Help

There are many kinds of helpers out there. Knowing at least **2 resources** you can share is an important part of the ALERT steps. Here are some options:

Therapist or Counselor

Someone trained to talk through feelings and problems

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Free, private counseling through your workplace

Telehealth / Online Therapy


Talk to a counselor from home using your phone or computer

Support Groups

Meet others who understand what you're going through

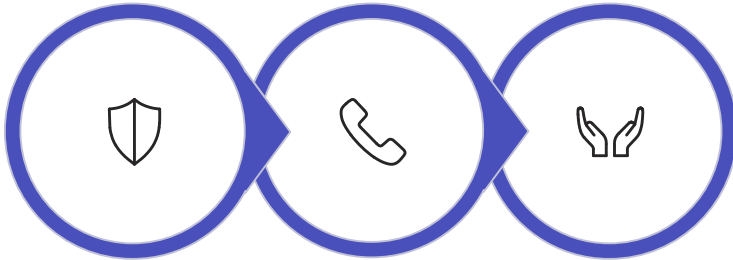
Primary Care Doctor

Your regular doctor can also help connect you to mental health care

 When referring someone, you can say: "I'm really concerned about you. I'd like to take you to [resource name] right now. They can help."

Suicide: What to Do

If someone talks about wanting to die or seems like they might hurt themselves, take it seriously. Stay calm and follow these steps:



**Keep them
safe**

**Connect
immediately**

**Stay with
them**

If there is immediate danger — like access to a firearm — call for emergency help or take them to the emergency room right away. The **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** is available 24/7.

- ⊗ Never leave someone alone if you believe they are in immediate danger. Call 988 or 911.





Take Time to Care for Yourself

Helping others can be hard on you too. After supporting someone through a tough time, it's important to take care of *yourself*. You can't pour from an empty cup!



Debrief with Someone You Trust

You don't need to share details. Just say: "I helped someone through something hard today and I'm feeling ____." Talking helps.



Care for Your Body, Mind & Spirit

Try a 1-minute breathing exercise, a short walk, stretching, prayer, yoga, or coloring — whatever helps you reset.



Follow Up with the Person

Go back and check in. Ask how they're doing. A simple "I've been thinking about you — how are you?" goes a long way.

Helpful Resources

You are not alone — and neither is the person you're helping. These trusted organizations offer free information, tools, and support:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988** anytime for free, confidential support.

[988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

[samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

Mental Health America

Tools, screenings, and resources for everyone.

[mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)

AFSP & NIMH

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and National Institute of Mental Health. [afsp.org](https://www.afsp.org) |

[nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)

The AAKOMA Project

Empowers Youth and Young Adults of Color and their families to seek help and manage mental health.

[aakomaproject.org](https://www.aakomaproject.org)

The Trevor Project

Mental health support for LGBTQ+ young people.

[thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)

✔ Remember the ALERT steps: **Awareness → Listen & Learn → Encourage Help → Refer → Take Time for Yourself**. You can make a difference!

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