Helping Someone Who Is Struggling

Offer steady support without taking away choice or carrying it alone.

Someone may be struggling with their mental health, physical health, circumstances, sensory demands or exhaustion. Their experience may not be obvious, and you do not need to identify a diagnosis before showing care.

Signs that someone might need support

Changes in connection:	Withdrawal, silence or fewer replies
Changes in routines:	Sleep, energy or concentration differences
Increased pressure:	Worry, overwhelm or distress

Begin with curiosity, not conclusions

You might say: “I have noticed things seem difficult. Would you like to talk, have some company or be given space?” Let the person choose what and how much to share.

What changes have I noticed, without assuming why?

How can I make it easier and safer for this person to respond?

Remember: You can be present and compassionate without asking for personal details or taking over.

Ways to Offer Support

Be supportive, not controlling.

Being helpful includes listening, asking permission and respecting boundaries. What feels comforting to one person may not suit another. Ask rather than assume.

1. Listen without judgement

Give time, reduce pressure, reflect what you hear, and avoid rushing to fix or minimise.

2. Offer practical support

Ask what would help: an everyday task, a quiet place, fewer demands or an accessible way to communicate.

3. Respect their choices

Make suggestions rather than decisions. A person may not want to talk now or follow a particular option.

4. Share useful resources

Offer information about trusted professionals or services, letting the person decide what to explore.

5. Care for your own wellbeing

Be clear about time, availability and what is beyond your role. You do not have to do this alone.

Helpful phrases

“Would you like me to listen or help think through options?” “Would it help if I checked in later?” “I can stay for a little while, and we can think about who else could help.”

Safety matters: If someone may be in immediate danger, seek urgent help. In the UK, call 999 for an emergency. For urgent mental health help in England, NHS 111 has a mental health option. Do not promise absolute confidentiality when someone is at serious risk.

My Support Plan

A practical guide for you.

Use this page to reflect on what you can offer, what lies outside your role, and how you will care for your own wellbeing. Write only what feels relevant; avoid recording another person's private health information.

1. What I can do

What practical or emotional support could I offer?

2. What I cannot do

What responsibilities or decisions are not mine?

3. My boundaries

What limits around time, availability or emotional capacity do I need?

4. How I will look after myself

What helps me recover, and who could I talk to for support?

5. Helpful contacts and resources

Which trusted services or professional support routes could I suggest?

You do not have to have all the answers.

A steady presence, choice, realistic boundaries and appropriate support can matter.