Worried about a friend?
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You might find this leaflet helpful if you are concerned about someone and are not sure how to help. It offers practical suggestions as to what you can do to help the person you are concerned about, and yourself.

What’s causing you to worry?

Has your friend confided in you with something you find worrying or hard to handle?

- Have there been any significant changes in your friend’s appearance, mood or behaviour?
- Are they drinking alcohol or taking drugs to a degree that worries you?
- Have other people expressed concern about this person?

Some things that may help your friend

Listen calmly and show that you understand your friend’s predicament.

Share similar experiences or feelings you may have had, but beware of telling them you know how they feel. You probably don’t.

Try to avoid giving lots of advice, or telling the person what to do.

Keep checking with your friend what they think would be helpful. It is important to encourage your friend to keep as much control of their own life as possible, so decide things together, rather than taking responsibility away from them.

If your friend wants to see a professional then you could gather information on suitable helping services (see sources of help).

Things that may help you

Keep calm. Remember that urgency is infectious and you are probably picking it up from your friend. It is not your urgency and you do not need to let it become so.

Decide in your own mind, how much you are able to give to this particular friend in this particular situation. Be ruthlessly honest with yourself on this. It won’t help you or your friend if you take too much on and later find that you are having difficulty coping.

Once you have decided, think through the kind of things you will need to say and
do in order to show your boundaries clearly (for example, telling your friend at the start of the conversation how much time you can spend with them today—and sticking to it). This will reassure your friend that he or she is not overburdening you.

If you don’t define and stick to your boundaries, you can find that the strength of your friend’s need has taken over your life and you end up emotionally drained.

Remember that you are not obliged to care. The choice is yours. Do not feign affection, as this leads to worse difficulties.

Look after yourself. This means giving time to your own needs. Supporting others is stressful and you will need to get away to recharge your batteries. Don’t forget your other friends and make sure you use them for support. Keep up with your studies.

Accept the fact that you will have mixed feelings about the situation and about your friend. This is human and you can expect it.

It is common to feel frustration and anger as well as sympathy.

Involve others so that your friend has a support team rather than just you. This is a much easier situation to handle. You could ask for professional support for yourself; a counsellor would be happy to discuss your concerns.

**Confidentiality**

If possible, check with your friend before you speak to other people about the situation.

You don’t have to divulge your friend’s name and personal details to talk about their situation in a confidential setting.

However, if you become worried for your friend’s safety, or the safety of others or yourself, then it would be best to contact local helping agencies, even if you do not have your friend’s permission to do so.
Sources of Help

The best source to choose may depend on the circumstances ... and also on the person you or your friend feel most comfortable consulting. Confidentiality will be respected by all of the following:

A doctor, preferably the GP of the person you are concerned about. Many students are registered with the Victoria Park Health Centre, 203 Victoria Park Road, Leicester  T: 0116 215 1105.  www.victoriaparkhealthcentre.co.uk

- The University Student Counselling Service for personal, emotional, relationship and study related concerns. 161 Welford Road. T: 0116 223 1780 E: counselling@le.ac.uk.
- Student Support (Mental Wellbeing)
  Hilary Craig and Becky Talbott, Mental Wellbeing Advisers
  T: 0116 252 2283/0116 2297751
  E: mentalhealth@le.ac.uk
  www.le.ac.uk/ssds/mentalwellbeing/index.html
- Course/year/personal tutor.
- If your friend lives in halls, you could speak to a sub-warden or a senior sub-warden.
- You or your friend could speak to someone from Nightline. This is a service for students run by students who are trained to listen and is available from 8pm to 8am on 0116 252 2004.
- The Samaritans offer a 24-hour anonymous telephone counselling line. You or your friend can talk to them about any issue that may trouble you.
  T: 08457 90 90 90 Leicester branch: 0116 2700 007 www.samaritans.org
- You can find information on various issues, as well as further links on our website:
  www.le.ac.uk/counselling
- You may also find the following website useful:
  www.student.counselling.co.uk  This is a national website with plenty of information on particular issues from academic to personal, health and other problems.
Where to find Counselling and Wellbeing

Our entrance is at the rear of the building located directly on the junction of University Road and Welford Road. We have a ramp and there is a large sign on the wall. The building is accessible to wheelchair users.

Contact Details

Counselling and Wellbeing
University of Leicester
161 Welford Road
Leicester
LE2 6BF

T: 0116 223 1780
F: 0116 223 1269

www.le.ac.uk/counselling

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