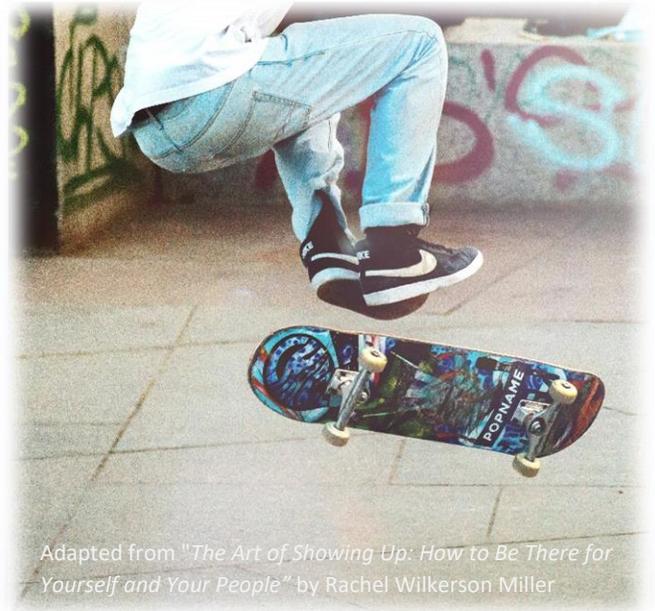


SHOW UP

Be There
for Yourself
and for
Your Friends



Adapted from "The Art of Showing Up: How to Be There for Yourself and Your People" by Rachel Wilkerson Miller

Be a Good Listener

Listen more than talk. It's really hard to listen without jumping in to share your own experiences. And usually, doing that is coming from a good place—you're trying to let them know that you understand—and sometimes that can be welcome. A friend may respond, "I'm so glad to hear you say this, too. Now I feel less alone." Keep in mind, though, that sometimes if you don't listen, it will silence your friend. They feel like, "OK, well, I was trying to talk to you about my breakup. And you just started talking about *your* dating problems...That didn't feel good."



When in Doubt, Ask

Sometimes we're afraid to ask because we think the other person will expect us to have the answers and we don't. Think back on when a friend asked you what you needed. Did you feel cared about? Ask:

- What's the best way I can support you right now?
- "Do you want to just vent?"
- How are you feeling about it?
- What's your thoughts right now?
- What do you want to do?"

Be Careful if You Talk About Yourself

Another way that people try to comfort someone else might be by saying "I've gone through something similar" and then changing the subject to an anecdote from their own life. Proceed with caution. If the person is feeling really alone or really ashamed, hearing that somebody they care about has gone through something similar can be validating and really affirming. The problem comes when, suddenly, the conversation is now about you and what happened to you.

The #1 Thing to Remember

If you're getting the sense that your friend is really overwhelmed and not doing well, and they need you to be there with them so that they're not so alone, just be there with them. It's really powerful to know that you don't have to put on a face for a friend, that you can just say you're still feeling bad when a friend asks...and it helps to know that a friend really cares.

If you're worried that your friend may be in danger, **get help!**

It's Okay to Just Say "I'm Sorry."

If words can't fix what's wrong, it's okay to just say "I'm sorry." Sometimes there isn't a perfect response that is going to actually make people feel better. What you want to do is to let the person know that you care and that they're not alone:

- This sucks. I'm so sorry it's happening to you.
- You don't deserve this.
- Thank you for telling me. I'm here for you.

Validating what a person is feeling helps the person know that it's okay to feel what they're feeling, and it helps them heal.

Don't Do Cliché

Please, don't say, "Everything happens for a reason." Allow the person to just feel what they're feeling. Maybe one day they can heal enough to look back and see that it did happen for a reason, but right now, just let them feel.

Don't Do Statistics

Avoid comments like "You know that 50% of marriages end in divorce." This won't be helpful to somebody who just found out about a divorce. Lean away from clichés; just say what's in your heart and really mean it and remember that just because it happens to a lot of people, doesn't mean it's any less devastating for the person experiencing it.

Don't Be a Foister or Fretter

When somebody is going through a difficult time, a lot of us naturally tend to fall into one of two behavioral patterns:

- A **Foister** is the someone who's just sort of like, I need to help you. I'm going to push my advice. I'm going to push my solution. I'm going to fix this for you. I'm going to foist this on you. And I'm going to be upset with you if you don't do it.
- A **Fretter** is the person who must take care of somebody else kind of to serve their own needs. They're really worried. They want to be the friend who's good. They want to do things right. And so, they kind of are the one who's constantly saying, like, "Is this enough? Is this good? Do you want me to do something else? I can get something else for you?"

What you might say is, "I went through something really similar a few years ago. It was really tough for me. If you ever want to talk about it, I'm more than happy to talk to you about it." By saying it this way, you're putting the control in their hands.

Give Control—Don't Take It

Sometimes when we experience something outside of our control, it helps to give a person a tiny bit of control of "we can talk about this when you want to talk about it." It lets the person know that they are not alone, but that you're not going to bore them with the story of how your pet died, or your relationship breakup, or your failed class.



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