



carecoins

# UNiDAYS

## Being There:

How to Support a Friend  
Who's Struggling

**A Carecoins guide to noticing the signs, starting the conversation, and supporting someone without burning out yourself.**

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## Why This Matters

It's hard watching someone you care about struggle. Maybe you've noticed changes in their mood, energy, or behaviour – and you're worried, but not sure what to say. You don't want to make it worse. You don't want to seem nosy. And most of all, you don't want to mess it up.

The truth is, you don't need to be perfect. You don't need to have all the answers. Just being present, showing up consistently, and listening with compassion can make a real difference. This guide is here to help you feel more confident doing that – with tips, tools and gentle reminders for when you're not sure how to help.

At Carecoins, we believe that mental health support doesn't just come from professionals – it also comes from the people around us, who care enough to notice, ask, and listen.



# Spotting the Signs That Something Might Be Wrong

Everyone has off days – but sometimes those days stretch into weeks, and you start to notice small signs that something might not be okay. Mental health struggles don't always look obvious. They often show up in subtle shifts, especially in uni settings where burnout and stress are already common.

## Withdrawing socially

They're avoiding plans or seem more distant than usual

## Changes in communication

They're replying less, cancelling more, or seem less engaged

## Low energy or motivation

They're struggling to get to lectures, do their work, or look after themselves

## Negative self-talk

They're avoiding plans or seem more distant than usual

## Changes in appearance or routine

They're replying less, cancelling more, or seem less engaged

## Substance use

Drinking more than usual or using substances to cope with stress or emotion

If you notice a few of these signs, trust your gut. You're not overreacting – **you're noticing**. That's the first step.

## How to Start the Conversation

One of the biggest fears students have is getting this part “wrong.” But the goal here isn’t to give a perfect speech or diagnosis – it’s to let your friend know that you care, you’ve noticed something’s up, and you’re a safe space to talk.

### Some gentle ways to start the conversation:

“Hey, I just wanted to check in – you’ve seemed a bit different lately. Are you okay?”

“I know you’ve had a lot on your plate. I’m here if you need anything – even just a bit of company.”

“No pressure at all, but I’ve been thinking about you and wondering if you want to talk.”

### What helps:

#### **Pick your moment**

Somewhere quiet, calm, and private if you can

#### **Speak from care, not judgement**

“I’m here because I care about you” is powerful

#### **Don’t force it**

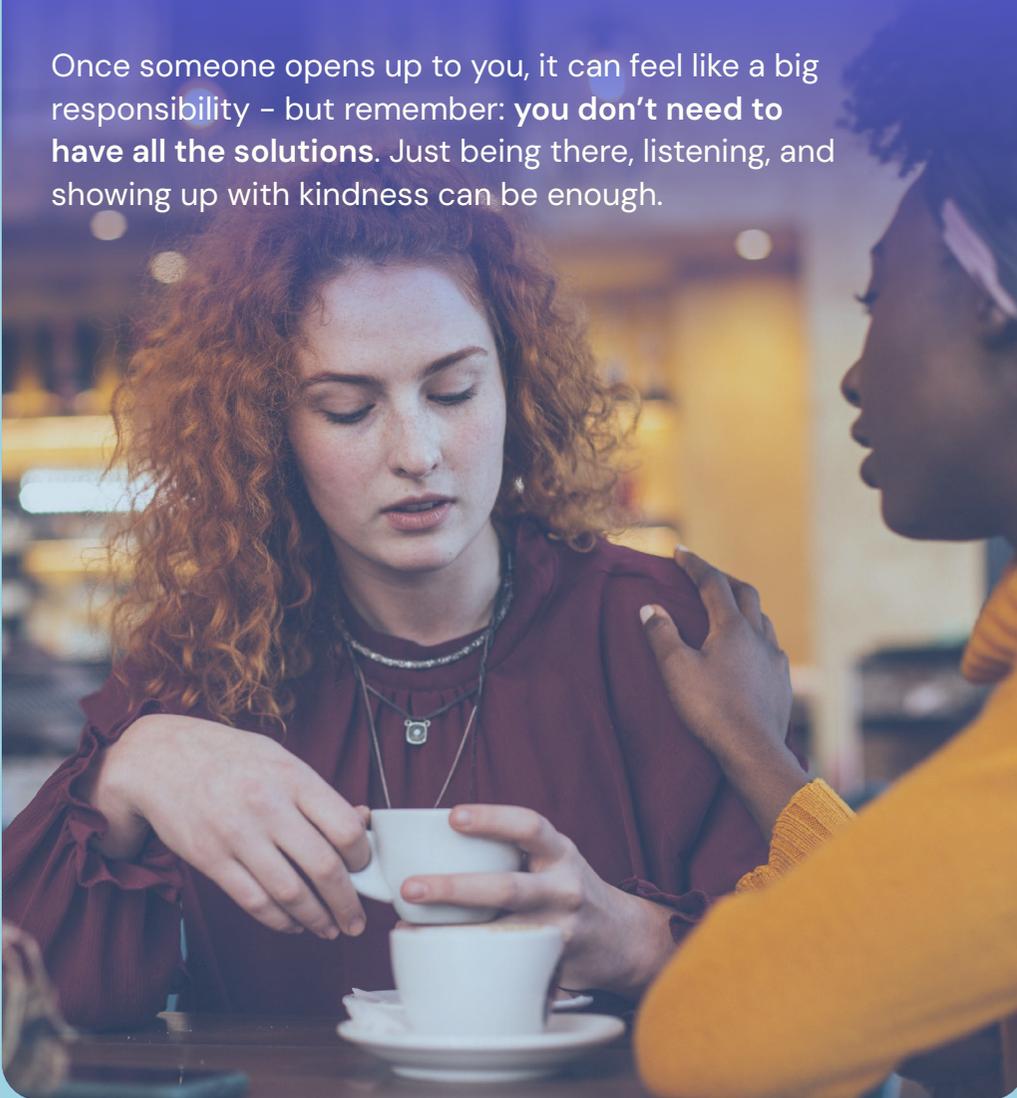
They might not be ready to open up, and that’s okay. You’ve opened the door.

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Even if they shrug it off, what they’ll remember is that you noticed. And that might matter more than you realise.

## How to Be Supportive (Without Becoming Their Therapist)

Once someone opens up to you, it can feel like a big responsibility – but remember: **you don't need to have all the solutions.** Just being there, listening, and showing up with kindness can be enough.



### Here's what real support looks like:

#### **Listening without fixing**

Don't jump to solutions. Just let them speak and feel heard.

#### **Asking what they need**

Try "How can I support you right now?" instead of guessing.

#### **Reassuring them they're not a burden**

People often fear they're "too much" when struggling.

#### **Offering gentle structure**

Suggest small, manageable things: a short walk, eating together, working side-by-side.

#### **Checking in consistently**

Even a text saying "thinking of you" can be grounding.

#### **Avoiding toxic positivity**

Instead of "you'll be fine," try "this sounds really tough – I'm here".

You might not feel like you're doing enough. But simply being there, noticing, checking in – that is enough. You're already helping more than you know.

You're not there to save them. You're there to stand beside them while they find their own path.

## Knowing When It's More Serious

It's one thing for a friend to be stressed, low or overwhelmed – but if you're starting to worry that they're in serious distress or danger, it's okay to act on that instinct. You don't need to "diagnose" anything to trust that someone's struggling.

### Red flags to take seriously:

- 🌀 Talking about feeling hopeless or worthless
- 🌀 Making comments about disappearing, not waking up, or feeling like a burden
- 🌀 Expressing that they don't see the point in anything
- 🌀 Any mention (even vaguely) of wanting to harm themselves

## What you can do:

### Stay with them

Emotionally or physically, if you're worried

### Let them know they're not alone

Even saying "I'm really glad you told me this" can be powerful.

### Help them find support

Offer to go with them to a uni wellbeing service or help them message a helpline.

### If it feels urgent

You can speak to a tutor, student support team, or a helpline like Samaritans

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Taking action isn't overstepping – it's looking out for someone's safety when they may not be able to do it themselves.



## Supporting Without Burning Out

You can be a great friend and still feel tired, overwhelmed, or unsure of what to do. Supporting someone else through a tough time is emotional work – and you're allowed to protect your own energy while doing it.

### Here's how to stay grounded:

#### **Acknowledge your own limits**

It's okay to not be available all the time

#### **Set healthy boundaries**

Be honest if you can't talk that day, and suggest a time when you can

#### **Look after your own mental health**

Rest, reflect, talk to someone you trust

#### **Don't carry it all alone**

You can encourage them to seek help from others, too

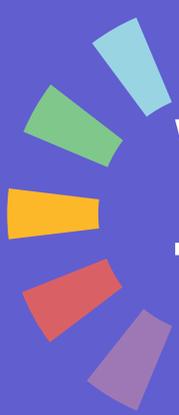
#### **Remember you're not responsible for their healing**

Support helps, but they need professional care if things go deeper

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You can care deeply for someone and care for yourself. **That's not selfish – it's sustainable.**





# Where to Signpost Them for Support

If your friend is open to seeking support but isn't sure where to start, you can gently point them toward these services. You could even offer to help them find the link or sit with them while they make an appointment.



## On Campus:

- 🕒 **University counselling services** (waiting lists can be long — reach out early)
- 🕒 **Student union or welfare officers**
- 🕒 **Personal tutors and academic advisors**
- 🕒 **Peer support groups**

## External Resources:

- 🕒 **Student Minds:** [studentminds.org.uk](http://studentminds.org.uk)
- 🕒 **Mind:** [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)
- 🕒 **Papyrus:** For suicide prevention in young people [papyrus-uk.org](http://papyrus-uk.org)
- 🕒 **Samaritans:** Call 116 123 anytime, for free

## Self-Help Tools:

- 🕒 **Apps:** Headspace, Calm, MoodTools, Student Health
- 🕒 **Togetherall:** A peer support community available to many students
- 🕒 **Podcasts:** “The Mindful Student”  
“Happy Place”
- 🕒 **Speak to friends and family**

# If they need the extra support...

We know that taking the first step can feel overwhelming – but your friend doesn't have to do it alone. Through our partnership with **UNiDAYS**, students can now access personalised, high-quality mental health support at an exclusive discount:

**carecoins**

**40% off your first 3 Carecoins** –  
Covering your initial consultation and first hour of therapy

**20% off all future sessions** —  
Because support should be sustainable

Whether they're struggling with stress, feeling stuck, or just need someone to talk to, our carefully matched therapists are here to help them feel heard, supported, and empowered – every step of the way.

**Learn more or book your session now at:**

t: **0300 002 0061**

e: **care@carecoins.co.uk**

Because **your wellbeing** is worth investing in — and we're here **when you're ready**.