

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND



SHOWING UP FOR A FRIEND IN THE GAMING COMMUNITY

The gaming community can be a very positive and supportive network. In fact, most gamers report having been supported by fellow gamers in tough times.¹

Nearly every person I've befriended through video games has been extremely supportive. They always notice when I'm not in my best mood, and they always make an effort to help me feel better or offer logical advice.

I am a veteran of the U.S. military. I have had a hard time adjusting to normal society. These people have helped me transition to becoming a part of society.

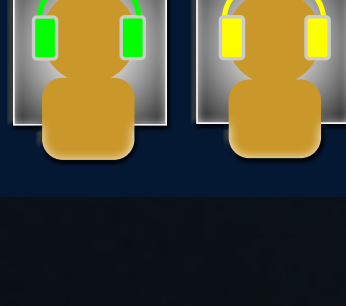
The vast majority of gamers (79%) report feeling confident in being able to tell when a fellow gamer is struggling with their mental health.¹

79%

The peers in the gaming community are a powerful resource. Equipped with the knowledge of how to recognize the signs of a friend who may be struggling and the tools for what to say, gamers can be present for one another in a way that few others may be able to.

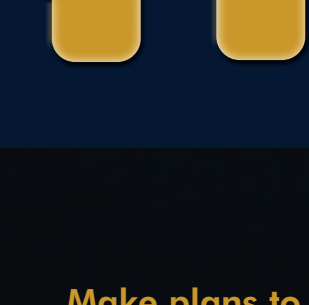
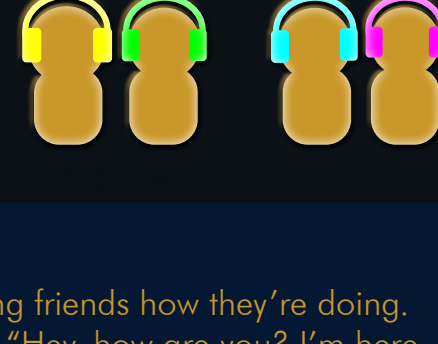
CREATING SUPPORTIVE GAMING COMMUNITIES

For gamers interested in creating supportive gaming communities, start by building stronger connections outside the game with the following ideas:



Consider connecting with online friends on a private server, in Discord, or another online voice/chat platform for gaming communities, or consider connecting offline.

Consider introducing gaming friends to another group of gamers that you're connected with.



Make an effort to ask gaming friends how they're doing. You can say something like, "Hey, how are you? I'm here if you have something on your mind." If a friend shares something that's bothering them, listen to them without judgment and try to remember to ask about it again the next time you're gaming together.

Make plans to hang out IRL when possible.



Make plans to game together.



SHOWING UP FOR A GAMER WHO NEEDS IT

If you're concerned about a fellow gamer, **the best thing that you can do is be there and show them that you care.** Below are several tips from fellow gamers on how to navigate a check-in:

- If someone doesn't want to talk, don't pressure them.
- Just knowing that someone is there really helps.
- Listen. Don't try to fix the problem unless they ask for advice. Really listen to what they have to say, be there for them, and let them know they're not alone.
- Encourage them to go AFK for a bit before starting another game.
- Say: "I'm here if you need me."

Hey, it seems like you're having a hard time. Let's get your mind off things and play your favorite game or grab a bite to eat. I'd love to help you through this.

"Offering an ear to listen, even if I don't take them up on it, has been hugely helpful to me in the past. Just knowing someone is there that actually cares about my problems is enough to keep me going at times. Having a gaming buddy to play with when I just need a distraction has also been helpful in the past."

WHAT CAN YOU SAY WHEN THEY SAY THAT THEY'RE HAVING A ROUGH DAY?

Use Active Minds' V-A-R tool to help navigate the conversation and meet them where they are.



VALIDATE

Validate what they are experiencing. Let them know it's okay to not be okay. Validation sounds like:

"That sounds difficult."

"It seems like you have a lot going on, it makes sense that you might not be feeling great."

"It's totally ok that you're not on top of your game right now. It's okay to feel down."

Appreciate their courage. Let them know that sharing was a good decision. Appreciation sounds like:

"I'm glad you chose to tell me."

"I know sharing what's really going on can be challenging. I appreciate that you did."

"It means a lot to me that you told me how you're feeling."



APPRECIATE



REFER

Refer them to skills and support. Help them find what will help them at that moment. For some people, professional support is important and for some, healthy coping and resilience skills will help. Refer sounds like:

"Feel like taking a break from games for a bit?"

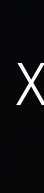
"Do you think it would help to talk with a therapist?"

"How about we play something a little less intense for a bit?"



To quote one gamer speaking with an online friend who was feeling overwhelmed by their classwork, **"You are much more than a grade, you are a dragon warrior."**

For more information, visit activeminds.org/var.



¹ Active Minds administered a survey online to 172 participants in October 2019. Questions explored perceptions about video games, the impact of video games on mental health, and how video game participants support and interact with each other online.