

# ON OUR SLEEVES<sup>®</sup>

The Movement for Children's Mental Health

## Making New Friends

A big part of school is meeting new people and making new friendships but making new friends can take time. Most people don't make best friends on the first day of school, so don't get discouraged if you feel like you don't fit in right away.

- Think about joining clubs or after school activities where you can meet people that have the same interests as you.
- Connect with others by asking questions about different things such as what they like, what they did over the summer break, and their families.
- Be a good listener and take the time to get to know the person for who they are.
- As you become more comfortable with that person, you can talk about activities you can do together after school.

## Helping Friends With Mental Health Concerns

Some of your friends may be going through hard times or having trouble with their mental health. We can help them by:

- Be there for them to distract them or simply listen to what they have to say.
- Be compassionate and do not define them by what they're going through or use inappropriate labels such as "crazy."
- If you're worried about their safety or the severity of their symptoms, help them access wellness services or an adult at home, school, or in the community for support. Remember, while it's important for you to be supportive of your friend, there are people who are trained in ways to help. The best thing you can do for your friend is help them connect to those adults.
- If you or a friend need immediate help due to having suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or text the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741-741. If there is an immediate safety concern, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

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## Unhealthy Friendships

Notice how your friends make you feel. You want to surround yourself with people that are supportive and bring you happiness.

We all make mistakes, and sometimes our friends can upset us, but if you feel bad when you're with someone over and over again, that may mean they are not a healthy friendship for you. Unhealthy friendships can be those people who:

- Make you afraid or threaten you
- Frequently blame and shame you
- Invalidate your feelings
- Force you to isolate from your other friends or family
- Don't let you take part in decision making