How do you tell if something is wrong?
• Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed
• Self-harming behaviors
• Changes in appetite or sleep
• Impulsive or reckless behavior
• Isolating self from friends
• Weight gain or loss
• Excessive fears, worries, anxieties
• Severe personality changes
• Overuse of drugs and alcohol
• Having trouble concentrating

What NOT to do
• Ignore the situation completely e.g. “You’ll be fine.” “Snap out of it.”
• Be dismissive about feelings: “We all have tough times.” “What do you have to be depressed about?”
• Give unsolicited advice: “Here’s what you need to do…”
• Ambush, such as holding an intervention
• Be uninformed about the issue
• Compare your friend’s situation with your own or someone else’s

What to do
• Approach your friend one-on-one, share your concerns
• Use active listening skills
• Reach out to someone you trust about the situation
• Use non-judgmental language
• Check in regularly with that friend
• Make sure your friend knows about resources on and off campus; go along if your friend is worried about asking for help
• Support your friend’s healthy behaviors
• Educate yourself about mental health issues
• Respond to mental health concerns as you would physical health concerns
• Respect your friend’s privacy (unless a person is suicidal, do not agree to secrecy when someone’s life is at risk)
• Ask if your friend is interested in any resources and, if so, share them
• Practice good self-care and know your limits
• Ask what your friend is doing to manage
• Be willing to wait, it might take some friends a while to come around to ask for help or be willing to seek it out. Try to remain open to them in the process.
• If your friend is reluctant to ask for help, you ask for help; consult with counseling service or student life or seek services for yourself
• Include your friend in regular activities, continuing to invite even if your invitations are resisted

What to say
• “I’ve noticed you ______ (describe behavior without judgment) lately. Is there anything I can do to help?”
• “How can I best support you right now?”
• If concerns around suicide exist ask, “Are you having suicidal thoughts?” It’s okay and encouraged to ask directly.
• “I’m not sure what else to do to help, but I can connect you with some people who do know how to help?”
• “I care about you.”

More information:
• luther.edu/counseling/help
• schedule a free consultation appointment with a counselor