

# Seeking Understanding to Help Friends in Need

## Objectives

- 4.5 Assess strategies to use in helping a friend in need of emotional care.
- 4.10 Demonstrate effective communication skills.

The student will be able to:

1. Identify underlying feelings and issues in a friend needing emotional care.
2. Describe how warmth, empathy, and respect impacts communication.
3. Explain how to develop understanding of someone needing emotional care or guidance.
4. Demonstrate effective responses when developing understanding of a friend's needs or challenges.
5. Determine when a listening ear is needed versus professional help for a friend needing emotional care.
6. Identify resources in the community to assist friends facing significant problems.

## Materials and Equipment

Responses to Promote Understanding—one per student

Responses to Promote Understanding—Teacher Key

Preparing for Guided Role-plays—one per student

## Student Learning Activities

Role plays

### Key Scriptures

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

*<sup>1</sup>A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Proverbs 15:4 (NIV)

*<sup>4</sup>The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.*

Proverbs 18:21 (NIV)

*<sup>1</sup>The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

## Galatians 5:16-6:2 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup>So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

<sup>19</sup>The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

<sup>1</sup>Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

## Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup>On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup>"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup>He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup>"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup>But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup>In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

<sup>36</sup>"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup>The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

## Key Points

Discuss the following Key Points with students throughout the lesson, intertwining the key points with the various activities used. The Key Points are not meant to be used as a mini-lecture, but rather a general content outline to use throughout the lesson. Some of the Key Points naturally connect with specific activities while other Key Points are more general and can be discussed at any point in the lesson. They are outlined below from basic information to a more complex understanding of the topic.

- God created people for relationship with him and others (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:24-25).
- Relationships are often messy and difficult because of living in a fallen world where not only do we sin but we also tend to hide our true selves from one another (Gen. 3). However, we are commanded to have relationships (Matt. 22:37-39; Gal. 6:1-2).
- Warmth, empathy, and respect are the building blocks of authentic relationships.
- Accepting and affirming someone helps to build understanding, care, and commitment in the relationship.
- A person can communicate hope and life to someone needing emotional care and guidance with their words and actions.
- To show understanding with empathy, nonverbal cues need to mirror the person's body, tone, and posture. For example, if the person is expressing joy, an empathetic person would also show through smiling, hugging or high-fiving the person, and have a happy, excited tone of voice.
- To show empathy and understanding, a person needs to
  - Focus his/her attention solely on the other person.
  - Strive to feel what the other person feels.
  - Have an open body posture and tone of voice.
  - Listen well.
  - Clarify both the feelings of the person and the content or issue the person is facing in a manner that invites a response.
- To encourage understanding, ask questions that are open-ended (requiring more than a yes/no answer) and focus on:
  - Interpretation—asks clarifying questions, checks for understanding, and offers tentative deductions of what has been shared.
  - Expansion—encourages sharing of more details and information about what is happening and/or how it is impacting the person.
  - Paraphrase or summarize—rewording, restating, and compacting the ideas, events, and facts in a few sentences.
  - Reflection—expressing the feelings of the person in light of the situation.
- To check that a friend agrees with your statements or questions of clarification, look for verbal and nonverbal cues and if the person expands, affirms, disagrees, or clarifies more about what you said.

- Barriers to being empathic toward and building understanding of someone include:
  - Make the statement about you (e.g., “I had the same experience and felt . . . .)
  - Question the person’s feelings (e.g., “You’re being a wimp.” “Why be sad? You’ll get through it.”)
  - Judge the other person’s feelings or telling him/her what to feel.
  - Be in control of the conversation.
  - Do most of the talking.
  - Try to fix the problem.
- The more empathy and understanding shown to a friend, the more likely the friend will share truth and may reveal more parts of the underlying issues and needs. However, it is important to know when to seek additional help beyond a listening ear.
- When you are overwhelmed as a listener of a friend’s problem and/or the friend is overwhelmed and you do not know how to help, get help for your friend by talking with a trusted adult, parent, family member, teacher, coach, youth minister, or mentor.
- When a friend is in physical or emotional danger (e.g., abuse, hurt, fights, suicide, depression, etc.) you need to get help through a trusted adult, parent, family member, teacher, coach, youth minister, or mentor.
- There are many national, regional, and local resources available for people in need of emotional and/or physical care.

### ***Lesson Introduction***

On a piece of paper, have students complete the following sentences:

1. When a friend needs physical help, I tend to . . . .
2. When a friend needs emotional care, I tend to . . . .
3. I give advice when . . . .
4. When I am emotionally hurting, I like for my friends to . . . .
5. When I am making poor choices, my friends typically . . . . I would prefer that they . . . .  
However, I need them to . . . .

Have student volunteers share the completion of their sentences with the class.

Discuss questions such as:

1. What makes caring for friends who are hurting or making poor choices difficult? Easy?
2. How do you know when to get involved in a friend’s struggles?

## Teaching Activities

### The Need for Care in Relationships

As a class, create a T-chart, labeling one column “To Do” and the other column “Not To Do”. Have students read Proverbs 15:1, 4, Proverbs 18:21, Galatians 5:16-6:2, and Luke 10:25-37. As the scriptures are read, have students list the actions and attitudes to do or not to do when helping others in the respective column on the T-chart.

Discuss questions such as:

1. How does our attitude about someone’s struggles come through in our actions?
2. Why is caring for others who are struggling important to God?
3. Why is how we care for others a skill we need to develop?

### Warmth, Empathy, and Respect

As a class, discuss how showing warmth, empathy, and respect in a relationship helps to create authentic relationships based on understanding one another. Have students share what it means to show those characteristics in a relationship. Have student volunteers demonstrate the following:

1. An open, inviting position versus a closed, defensive position when talking with someone (standing and sitting).
2. Facial expressions that invite versus close off someone from sharing information.

For each of the statements below, have students write a more warm, empathetic, and respectful statement that still addresses the given issue and intent of the statement/question.

1. “Why are you quitting your job? Did you really resign or did you get fired? What are you going to do about paying for your car?” What did your parents say?” (Possible response: “I’m so sorry . . . . What happened with your job? What do you think about not working there?”)
2. “So your date left you at the restaurant? I ate there once. Quite a place! Do you know they have half-price sushi on Thursdays?” (Possible response: “Wow, what was your reaction?”)
3. “Let me tell you how it was when I was on that club team. We had so many drills that people would start puking in the trash cans during the drill. Why, we worked so hard that people on the team would go straight to bed once practice was over.” (Possible response: “You look exhausted to me. How is it going at the practices?”)
4. “What can I say? You made a really big mistake and now you have to pay the consequences for it. Just because everybody else did it, doesn’t mean you had to do it too. You are definitely in big trouble.” (Possible response: “It looks to me like you are upset about what happened. So what do you think about what you did?”)
5. “Just get over it. Think positive thoughts and life will get better.” (Possible response: “Can I give you a hug? It’s tough to be feeling sad a lot of the time. How can I help?”)

## Teaching Activities

### Warmth, Empathy, and Respect continued

As a class, discuss questions such as:

1. How do the words and actions demonstrated encourage communication? A genuine relationship?
2. How does showing warmth, empathy, and respect encourage acceptance? Develop trust? Impact understanding?
3. What makes you feel like a person cares about you?

### Developing Understanding of Issues and Needs

Share with students how seeking understanding to help someone requires one to listen for the content and the underlying feelings and issues. After describing interpretation, expansion, paraphrasing/summarizing, and reflection, have students complete **Responses to Promote Understanding**. Using the **Responses to Promote Understanding Teacher Key** to guide the discussion, have students give examples of ways each of the types of responses can be used when helping a friend.

Assign students into small groups and give each group a different situation given below. Have students develop a role-play about their assigned situation, using responses from **Responses to Promote Understanding**. Have the groups present their role-plays to the class. Ask the class for feedback about how the students sought understanding to help the friend in the role-play.

1. You are concerned that your friend is struggling with his/her dating relationship.
2. You and your best friend have had a major disagreement and have not talked or spent time together for two weeks.
3. Your friend is very angry at you about something you did.
4. Your friend was cut from the team roster and is upset.
5. Your friend is upset about his/her parents' divorce.
6. You are concerned that your friend is making some poor choices.
7. You notice that your friend is not acting normal and you are concerned about him/her.

## Teaching Activities

### Getting Additional Help

As a class, discuss when to get help when trying to help a friend (e.g., suicide, abuse). Have students identify and research national, regional, and local community resources available to help people who are struggling with individual and family concerns.

Discuss questions such as:

1. Why is it important for a friend who is helping someone to keep a healthy perspective on his/her effectiveness in helping that person?
2. How do you know that you need to seek support in helping your friend?
3. What can you do to help a friend seek additional help beyond what you can offer?
4. Why are some people resistant to receiving counseling?
5. At what point is it critical for an individual or family to get help?
6. What motivates people to receive counseling? Learn new interpersonal and relationship skills?

## Review and Assess

Have students divide into groups of three and assign the roles of observer, helper, and friend to each member of their group. Assign each group of three one of the above role-plays or have the friend create a problem he/she or someone he/she knows is experiencing. Have students complete **Preparing for Guided Role-plays** according to their assigned roles. Then have the students role-play their situations in their groups without any practice or communication about their individual preparation. If there is time, have students repeat the process, using different situations and different roles for each student. Have students write a paragraph describing their experiences in each of the roles they represented. Have them answer the questions:

1. What effective techniques did I use in understanding and helping the other person? (helper)
2. What barriers to understanding did I tend to exhibit to the helper? (friend)
3. What did I notice about how the other two people listened to one another? Understood one another? (observer)
4. What did you learn about the process of seeking understanding?

## Extended Learning

Have students create a list and description of national and local resources and hotline numbers for use in helping friends and themselves in crises.

Have students research a particular issue they encounter in their friendships (e.g., depression, drugs, alcohol, reckless driving, smokeless tobacco, lying to parents, cheating on schoolwork, cutting, eating disorders, etc.). Tell them to create a one-page handout describing the issue and suggesting ways to help.

## Opt-Out Assignment

Have students talk with a teacher, school counselor, or other professional about helping friends in need. Have them write a summary of their discussion.

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### Sources

Cochran, Jess and Cochran, Nancy. *The Heart of Counseling: Counseling Skills through Therapeutic Relationship*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2015.

Sweeten, Gary. *Apples of Gold*. Cincinnati, OH: Christian Information Committee, Inc. 1983.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Seeking Understanding to Help Friends in Need— Preparing for Guided Role-plays

**Directions:** In your group, you will be assigned the role of friend, helper, or observer. You will have five minutes to complete the questions below to prepare for your role. Then you will have a seven-minute conversation about the problem with the following purpose:

- a. The Friend will initially try to communicate the problem and feelings to the Helper. As the Helper tries to seek understanding, the Friend shares deeper thoughts and feelings. If using a problem or situation different than assigned by the teacher, make sure the problem is not extremely personal, does not deal with anyone at school, and is not gender-specific if in coed groups.
- b. The Helper will try to understand the Friend and his/her thoughts and feelings about the problem, using open-ended questions to clarify and identify underlying issues and feelings.
- c. The Observer will prepare to observe the role-play between the Friend and the Helper and then take notes during the role-play for feedback on how the Helper sought understanding of the Friend's problem/situation.

Circle your assigned role and then complete the following questions to help you prepare for it.

### Friend

1. What is the problem, struggle, or situation you are going to share? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How will you show your emotional state to the Helper at first? \_\_\_\_\_

a. Verbally? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Non.verbally? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How will you describe the information your problem/struggle/situation? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What are your feelings about it? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are your underlying concerns you hope that the helper will pick up? \_\_\_\_\_

a. Thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Feelings \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How will you respond when the Helper tries to understand you? \_\_\_\_\_

a. Verbally \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Nonverbally \_\_\_\_\_

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## Helper

1. How will you communicate warmth, empathy, and respect to the Friend? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How will you try to support the Friend? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How will you try to understand the Friend's problem/situation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What open-ended questions will you use to clarify what the Friend says and feels?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How will you try to identify underlying feelings and issues beyond what the Friend initially states?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. If appropriate, how will you encourage the Friend to seek additional help beyond what you can give?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Observer

1. What nonverbal cues will you look for to make sure the Helper is understanding the Friend?

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2. What verbal cues will you look for to make sure the Helper is understanding the Friend?

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3. How can you determine if the Helper is using open-ended versus closed questions?

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4. What 3 questions/statements might you suggest to the Helper to use in each of the following areas:

a. Interpretation \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Expansion \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Paraphrase/Summarize \_\_\_\_\_

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d. Reflection \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Seeking Understanding to Help Friends in Need— Responses to Promote Understanding

**Directions:** For each of the following phrases, code the statement or question according to the appropriate description below.

- Interpretation (I)—asks clarifying questions, checks for understanding, and offers tentative deductions of what has been shared.
- Expansion (E)—encourages sharing of more details and information about what is happening and/or how it is impacting the person.
- Paraphrase or summarize (P/S)—rewording, restating, and compacting the ideas, events, and facts into a few sentences.
- Reflection (R)—expressing the feelings of the person in light of the situation.

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|---|--|
| ___ 1. Could it be that . . . .             | ___ 14. Sounds like . . .  |
| ___ 2. How are you handling this?           | ___ 15. What might be some of the reasons for this?                                      |
| ___ 3. So what happened was . . . .         | ___ 16. So you're telling me that . . . .  |
| ___ 4. You really like . . . .              | ___ 17. You're very (emotion). . . .   |
| ___ 5. I wonder if . . .                    | ___ 18. Tell me more.  |
| ___ 6. I think I heard you say . . . .      | ___ 19. The emoticon that I would use for what you are feeling is (draw emoticon). . . . |
| ___ 7. You seem to be feeling . . . .       | ___ 20. So basically . . . .   |
| ___ 8. How is that for you?                 | ___ 21. Are you thinking that . . . .  |
| ___ 9. Are you saying that . . . .          | ___ 22. I hear you saying . . . .  |
| ___ 10. I sense that you're feeling . . . . | ___ 23. Please share . . . .   |
| ___ 11. Why do you think . . . .            | ___ 24. So you're suggesting that . . . .  |
| ___ 12. So you're telling me that . . . .   | ___ 25. What do you mean by . . . .  |
| ___ 13. I get the impression that . . . .   |  |

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Seeking Understanding to Help Friends in Need— Responses to Promote Understanding— Teacher Key

**Directions:** For each of the following phrases, code the statement or question according to the appropriate description below.

- Interpretation (I)—asks clarifying questions, checks for understanding, and offers tentative deductions of what has been shared.
- Expansion (E)—encourages sharing of more details and information about what is happening and/or how it is impacting the person.
- Paraphrase or summarize (P/S)—rewording, restating, and compacting the ideas, events, and facts into a few sentences.
- Reflection (R)—expressing the feelings of the person in light of the situation.

I 1. Could it be that . . . .E 2. How are you handling this?P/S 3. So what happened was . . . .R 4. You really like . . . .I 5. I wonder if . . .P/S 6. I think I heard you say . . . .R 7. You seem to be feeling . . . .E 8. How is that for you?P/S 9. Are you saying that . . . .R 10. I sense that you're feeling . . . .E 11. Why do you think . . . .P/S 12. So you're telling me that . . . .I 13. I get the impression that . . . .I 14. Sounds like . . .E 15. What might be some of the reasons for this?P/S 16. So you're telling me that . . . .R 17. You're very (emotion). . . .E 18. Tell me more.R 19. The emoticon that I would use for what you are feeling is (draw emoticon). . . .P/S 20. So basically . . . .I 21. Are you thinking that . . . .I 22. I hear you saying . . . .E 23. Please share . . . .I 24. So you're suggesting that . . . .E 25. What do you mean by . . . .