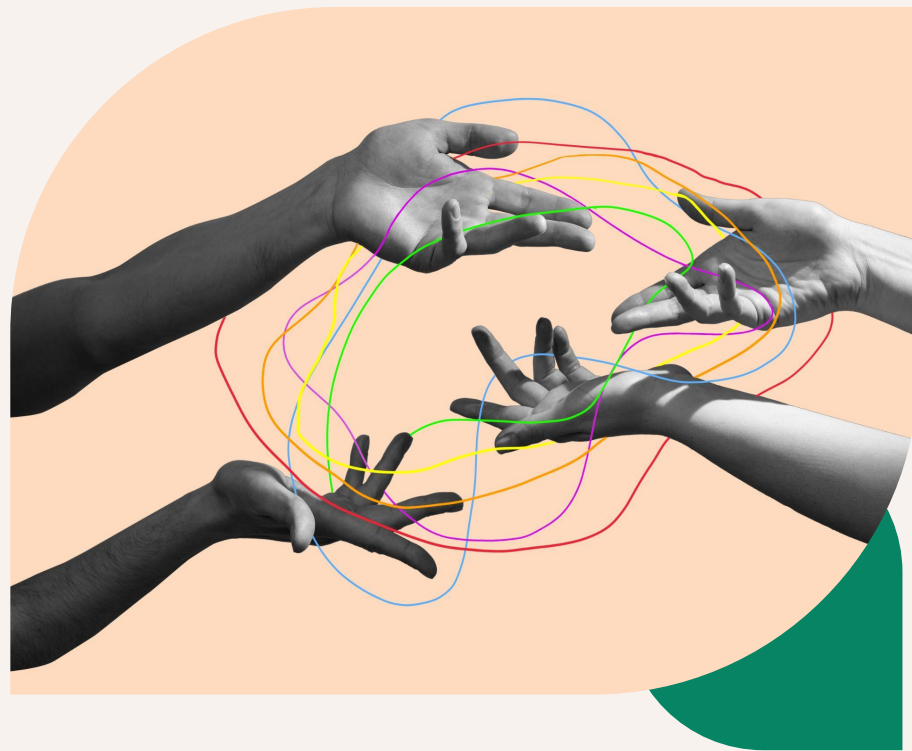


# Being There: How To Be a Better Friend and Ally

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## Good friends are good for us

High quality social relationships [result in decreased stress, a higher self-image, and more resilience](#). A sense of belonging can actually increase feel-good hormones, like oxytocin and dopamine, while lowering stress hormones, like cortisol. That leaves us feeling happier, less lonely, and more capable of managing stress. Connecting with others also helps us to feel seen and valued, a key component in healthy self-esteem.

### Don't make it about being perfect.

Good friendships aren't good all the time. We're all human, and that means that sometimes we say and do hurtful things to the people we care about the most. Just like any relationship, friendships will have their ups and downs, and that's okay.

## 5 things good friends do:

- 1. They schedule time to be together.** Ongoing connection builds better friendships. Making time for regular coffee dates, walks, or even calls or Zoom check-ins can go a long way.
- 2. They listen.** We all want to feel heard. Listening without interruption helps everyone feel respected and valued. Don't feel like you have to give advice – sometimes a friend just wants to share their feelings.
- 3. They're honest and upfront.** Good friendships are founded on honesty and transparency. That means sharing if something makes you uncomfortable. (It sounds simple, but a gentle way to open up dialogue is by saying, "I felt awkward or uncomfortable or sad when you said...")
- 4. They're vulnerable.** Research shows that vulnerability makes us more likable, not less.
- 5. They honor commitments.** Being reliable is key to being a good friend. For example, showing up when you say you will helps build trust over time.

## Being a friend and an ally

Supporting friends also means accepting them for who they are, and sometimes that can extend to supporting the communities they come from. Especially when those groups are marginalized.

Here are five ways to be a supportive ally:

- 1. Listen.** The first and most important part of being an ally is developing your ability to listen. Recognize that when it comes to a particular group's experiences, you may not be the authority. Make room for other voices and opinions that may make you uncomfortable.
- 2. Do the homework.** Don't claim to support a group's cause without knowing its history and theirs, and don't go to a friend from this group to ask for help. It's not their job to educate you. Instead, spend some time doing research online. There's plenty of great resources, but you can start with podcasts and writing focused on racial justice like [Codeswitch](#) and [Yale's list of anti-racism books](#), or [LGBTQ articles](#) posted by the ACLU.
- 3. Don't practice performative allyship.** Your allyship is important, but you shouldn't use it to amplify your own image. Ensure you're not broadcasting your allyship more than you're acting as an ally. Don't let a hashtag, and emoji, or an enamel pin be the only way you support a cause.
- 4. Speak up in your own circle.** If someone you know exhibits hatred or prejudice toward these groups, speak up. Explain why this doesn't sit right with you. Remember, you can call out someone's negative language or behavior without criticizing them as a person. Be friendly but firm.
- 5. Learn from your mistakes.** You're willingly going outside of your comfort zone and relearning how to look at issues and interact with people in respectful ways. Mistakes are natural. Acknowledge your mistakes and learn from them.

*No matter who you're supporting, it's important that you make the effort and show up for them when you can, and that you be yourself when you do. Like good friends, good allies are both reliable and reliably human.*



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