

SO, YOU'D LIKE TO HELP...

Traumas are life changing events. The person you know and want to help will experience normal trauma responses that can be confusing and distressing. Below you will find some guidelines for ways to support and help someone who has been through a trauma.

- Be present and available
- Invite them to share what happened without pressuring
- Listen well without offering solutions, advice, or a “quick fix”
- Let them talk as much as they need (even if you’ve heard it before)
- Help them to establish routines, set small goals and engage with others who can be supportive
- Allow them to express fear and anger without judgment
- Allow them to ask searching spiritual questions without feeling the need to provide an answer
- Educate yourself about traumatic reactions
- Provide loving feedback when they are unrealistic, engaging in risky behaviors, making unwise decisions or not taking care of themselves
- Be a buffer between them and those who are merely curious or who cannot offer legitimate help (though it may be sincere)
- Say things like “I went through something similar and felt _____. How is this affecting you?” rather than “I know how you feel.”
- Instill hope, but don’t give false promises
- Avoid minimizing or making light of what has happened
- Avoid spiritualizing

Finally, get support for yourself. It is very stressful and difficult to see someone you care about hurting. You may hear about traumatic details that are hard to put out of your mind. Make sure that you have good support and a care plan for yourself.