

Navigating difficulties in friendships:

Our top tips for young people

A gentle reminder: We recognise that difficulties within friendships can be quite complex depending on your age, the length of your friendship and perhaps the reasons why any conflict or distance has emerged. Whilst we hope these tips are helpful for you and the state of your friendships, we recognise they may be more helpful for some than others.

Approach conversations without judgement or criticism:

Try to understand your friends' position, rather than accusing them of anything e.g. "you leave me out" or "you never bother with me".

Instead try to explain how you feel about the distance between you e.g. "I've noticed we are struggling to find time to catch up and I've missed our chats, I sometimes feel hurt when you don't reply. Do you ever feel the same?"

This can:

- open up better communication between you
- build greater trust
- help you find more effective ways to move forward

Find a shared understanding shared understanding of what you'd like your friendship to look like:

Here are some helpful questions you might want to discuss together:

- Are you friends who feel a need to speak daily to feel valued, or can you go for long periods of time between contact and still feel closely connected?
- Do you prefer to keep in touch by phone call, on social media or in person?
- How do you let each other know you care; are you both open to verbally expressing your appreciation for one another or do you show it in different ways, like sending memes?

Think about how much of yourself you're able to offer:

Although friendships often go through phases where one person may need more support than the other, if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed from providing support it can be important to realise that it's not always your job to "fix" things for them.

You can still be there for your friend and respect your own limits and boundaries. Some helpful steps might be:

- trying to encourage them to reach out to a trusted family member, teacher for some professional support if they need it.
- to carve out some time where you might be able to take a break away from feeling quite so needed, perhaps by taking a phone break.

It's ok to move on:

When we've been very close to someone it can be really hard to imagine not having them in our lives anymore, but sadly friendships do sometimes need to come to an end.

When this happens, it's not unusual to experience what feels like a major loss reaction. Maybe you have both grown apart and it's hard to see a good reason to stay in touch now, or perhaps you've recognised that the friendship is unhealthy or even harmful.

In this case, it's really important to remember that you deserve to have respectful and trusting relationships.

Although it might feel difficult at first, moving on can open up new, more meaningful and trusting friendships.

Support is available

You can check if Kooth is available in your area by visiting **kooth.com** and selecting "**Join Kooth**" to get started.

If Kooth isn't available in your area and you need support, we recommend exploring the following support options:

- SHOUT
- Childline
- NHS Choices
- Samaritans