



June 24th, 2020 | Week 12

Welcome to the Weekly Well-Being Connection! Each week we will share advice from our clinical experts on ways to care for your mental health and well-being throughout COVID-19.

Reach Out!

As humans, we have several hard-wired responses to stress, like our fight or flight response. There are other, less widely known responses too. **Researchers have started looking at a stress response known as tend and befriend.** This refers to the pull many of us feel to reach out and support others. Given high stress levels many of us are facing, it is not surprising that **we may be more attuned to others' struggles right now and may be wondering how we can be a support.**

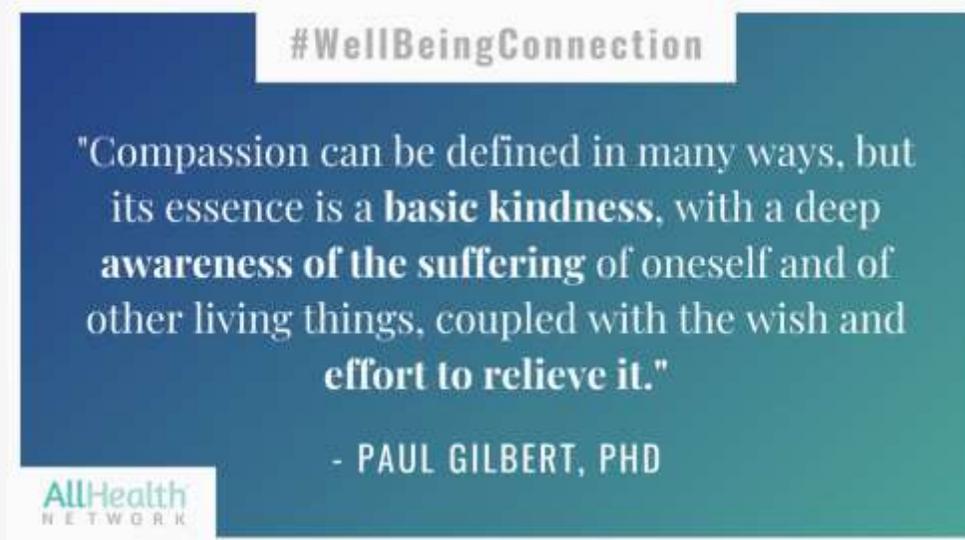
First, we recommend you check in with yourself. How are you really doing at the moment? Are you in a place to offer compassionate and empathic support? Even with the best intentions, **if we try to support others when we are not in a solid place ourselves, we can inadvertently make things worse or become overwhelmed ourselves.** Sometimes, even if the urge to tend and befriend is strong, we may need to first practice tending and befriending ourselves. Some of our past posts on anxiety, uncertainty, and trauma offer suggestions around this topic.

Once you are in a good place to be a support, reach out! This can take many forms, depending on your relationship with the person; a heart-to-heart conversation, a quick text message letting someone know we are thinking of them, or a suggestion to socialize (in whatever way feels

safe and comfortable to you both) can all be effective. **What you do specifically is not as crucial as conveying the message you are there.** As the [Seize the Awkward](#) campaign reminds us, whatever gets you talking works.

If someone does want to talk, make sure you are in a place to **listen and respond with compassion and empathy – not sympathy.** As Brené Brown reminds us, sympathy drives disconnection (which is the complete opposite of what we are going for!). This quick [video](#) explains the difference between the two and helps frame why an empathic response to our struggles is so meaningful to us as humans.

While talking with others about what they are feeling, thinking, and doing is one way to support them, sometimes folks aren't in a place that they want to talk or we may not be the person they feel most comfortable opening up to. **This is where action-oriented support can be really helpful.** Offers of specific, concrete support can go a long way here. Instead of asking folks if there is anything we can do for them, we might offer to send them a meal, walk their dog, or pick up something for them while we are at the store. These tangible offers of support can often go a long way in showing people they are not alone and potentially ease a little bit of the weight they may be carrying.



If you are concerned someone is struggling with a mental health crisis, substance use, or may not be able to stay safe, know the Colorado Crisis Line is a great resource for offering coaching to any of us who

want to talk through our concerns and how we might offer our loved ones support. They can be reached year round **at 1-844-493-8255 (TALK) or text TALK to 38255.**

Resource links

- [Self-Care Institute - COVID-19 Self-Care Support](#)
- [Psychology Today - Coping With Anxiety During COVID-19 Crisis](#)

Archives

- [Week 11 - Need For Connection vs Digital Burnout](#)
- [Week 10 - Supporting Teens Through COVID-19](#)
- [Week 9 - Tolerating Disagreements Around COVID-19](#)
- [More](#)

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