

EXTENDING SUPPORT TO OTHER STUDENTS DURING DIVISIVE EVENTS: A FEW IDEAS

Transformative events - such as the war taking place in Israel and Gaza - affect us deeply, yet unevenly. Whether it is a brief interaction in a class or student club meeting or when passing one another in the hallway, you can reach out to support another student - even when your views differ from theirs. Here are some ideas to show support in brief one-on-one talks.

Think before you talk and then talk like a real person. Remind yourself that the purpose for reaching out is to show support and empathy. Be genuine when connecting with other students. Let them know you value them as a person. There are no magic words; just be yourself when you reach out to check in.

Acknowledge the situation and be supportive. (“I know there’s lots going on. It’s tough watching the news. How are you doing?”)

If they are grieving a personal loss, express empathy. (“How are you feeling?” “Losing a loved one is unimaginable. I am sorry for your loss. I am here if you want to talk.”) Sometimes you can let them know you care by just sitting with them for a while without saying anything.

Show that you hear them without judging or entering into an argument. (“I think I hear not only your sadness and concerns about the thousands of innocent lives lost but also apprehension about what happens next.” “So, with your connections to the region, you are feeling this with even more depth and urgency.”) If they try to persuade you to agree with their position, let them know that you’re focused on being a friend. (“There are some important arguments going on, but mostly I’m wondering how you’re doing in the midst of this awfulness.”)

If they express concern about their safety or well-being, offer to help locate and make an appointment with safety resources, counselors, those who will help them report, or other professionals on campus. You might ask about their confidence or trust in available resources.

Think about ways to conclude the conversation. Try to end on a positive note. Allow them to preserve self-esteem and leave them with the sense that you value them and want to be supportive in a difficult time. End the conversation after checking in, or, regrettably, if the discussion turns argumentative. (“Let’s stay in touch.” “Thanks for talking. This is a tough time.”)

Reaching out matters even if they are not interested. The other person may not want to talk now, or at all. Respect their answer if they are not interested. (“I understand. If you want to talk later, let me know.”)

THIS CHECKLIST IS FOR A STUDENT REACHING OUT TO ANOTHER STUDENT. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR FACULTY AND STAFF REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER AS WELL. FOR THOUGHTS ON FACULTY REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT STUDENTS, SEE [HERE](https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/resources/supporting-students-through-tragedy), <https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/resources/supporting-students-through-tragedy>. FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS, SEE [HERE](https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-12/Contentious%20meetings%20checklist.pdf), <https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-12/Contentious%20meetings%20checklist.pdf> FOR CAMPUS LEADERS COMMUNICATING WITH THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY, SEE [HERE](https://go.osu.edu/dcpclcl), <https://go.osu.edu/dcpclcl>.