

# how to be a friend

*tips for "How to be a friend" to a neighbor or loved one living with or recovering from a behavioral health disorder*

- Be respectful to the person.
- When talking about people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders, the guiding principle is, to refer to the person first, not the illness.
- Be mindful of both your verbal AND your non-verbal language
- Recognize that people in recovery from mental illness and substance use disorders are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters
- Use your basic listening skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, body orientation, attention, prompts, open-ended questions, reflection, paraphrasing, summarizing, probing, demonstrating empathy)
- Approach a person with mental illness with an accurate view of mental health issues and from a strength-based holistic perspective
- Avoid belittling their situation, by assuming that they have chosen to be in it
- Recognize and suspend your judgment or biases
- You are not around to "cure" anyone, but to assist in their recovery, which is a personal journey and a process
- Have an optimistic attitude!!
- If ever in a crisis situation, use ALGEE
  - A: Assess for risk of suicide or harm
  - L: listen non-judgmentally
  - G: give reassurance and information
  - E: encourage appropriate professional help
  - E: encourage self-help and other support strategies