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| **Supporting people who are upset****How do you help someone who is upset?**Good listening is a very good start. It is harder and rarer than a lot of people think. Some ideas are:* Start by assessing if the situation is safe for you to help and evaluating what you think has happened.
* Make sure you are in a state where you can help. Are you shaken by what happened too? If so, take a moment or have someone else help. Take care of yourself too.
* Introduce yourself and be friendly.
* Ask what has happened and what they need.
* Be patient, bear in mind that they might not be able to explain themselves straight away.
* Give people time to talk.
* Give them space and don't crowd them.
* Make eye contact appropriately but don't stare.
* Be physically still and relaxed - not agitated or using sudden body movements.
* When you talk, use a calm voice – don't shout or whisper and don't interrupt.
* It is best to avoid false reassurance such as, "everything will be okay". After all, it might not be. And even if it is, that may not be how the person is feeling at that moment.
* Offer non-verbal encouragement using phrases like, "mmm" and so on. This indicates that you are listening and are happy to hear what the person is saying.
* A good way to show you have understood is to reflect out loud on what the person has said. You could say, for example, “so, you’re very worried about that”.

**What are things to avoid?**Here are some basic mistakes to steer clear of:* Don't try to jolly people up or try to get them to see the funny side. Your task is to respect how they're feeling now and help them deal with it, not suppress it.
* Don't say things like, "I know just how you are feeling, the same thing happened to me". This isn't empathy, it is more like boasting. It is alienating and irritating.
* Don't hurry the next action. Always remember that a person who is upset is vulnerable and probably not in a state for successful decision-making.
* Don’t hug them, it might not make them feel better and there are other ways to comfort someone.

CreditsThese tips are based on research and development work by Dr Sarah Davidson and was written by PJ White and Dr Sarah Davidson. It was produced in March 2009. The classroom activity was published in December 2011. It was reviewed in June 2021. |

**Story cards for the person who is upset –**

choose from one cards below.

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| Liv is out shopping with her mum. Suddenly, a woman collapses to the floor. The woman’s daughter, who seems the same age as Liv, is panicking, she doesn’t know what to do and is very upset. She is shouting to her mum but she won’t answer. People are standing around but no one is doing anything, they are looking around waiting for someone to do something. |

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| Javid is out with his friends. They are camping in a field celebrating their end of exams. They were drinking. His friend starts messing around and ends up falling and landing badly on their ankle. They are in a lot of pain, and it looks like it’s in a funny position. Javid’s other friends don’t know what to do and are worried about getting into trouble. |

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| Susie’s sister got the results back for an exam that they studied really hard for. Her sister thought she would get a really good mark, but it isn’t as good as she had expected. She’s really disappointed and hasn’t spoken to anyone all day. Susie is nervous, but feels she should support her.  |

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| Bex is walking home one night when she sees a young man lying on the floor. He looks like he’s bleeding a lot. She can’t see anyone else around. She knows if someone doesn’t put pressure on the wound soon, he might be in serious danger. She has a mobile phone and a scarf she could use.  |

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| Zak is with his friends in town when they walk past a guy sitting on the floor. He is slurring his words and looks like he can’t lift his arm very well. His friends laugh and think he’s drunk. Zak’s grandmother had a stroke once, so he knows the signs. He suggests he might not be ok, but his friends tell him to ignore it, they’re already late to meet up with others at the cinema. |

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| Tom’s younger sibling choked on something a few days ago. He couldn’t cough, speak or breathe and Tom had to give him back blows and abdominal thrusts to dislodge the object. It worked and the doctor checked and said he’s fine now, but since then his mum has been really worried about it happening again. Tom also keeps thinking about it. His best friend has noticed something is wrong and messages him to ask if he’s ok. |

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| Michael’s best friend got meningitis recently. He was really sensitive to light, he had a terrible headache and a high fever. Luckily, his dad knew the symptoms for meningitis and got him to the hospital quickly. He’s still there. The doctors are treating him. His friend is worried and bored. He was looking forward to something that now has to be cancelled because he won’t be well enough to go. |

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| Fatima’s sibling burned themselves on a hot pan in the kitchen earlier. Fatima helped them to hold it under cold water for 20 minutes. Their mum is a nurse and she says it will be fine, but it still stings a bit. Fatima’s sibling is in a little bit of pain and feels silly because they knew the pan was hot and that they shouldn’t have touched it. |