

# BEHIND HAPPY FACES

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## Alpha Phi - Key



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

These outcomes show what knowledge and skills participants should gain from the lesson. It is crucial you review the goals of the lesson with the members so they know what they will learn.



### HANDOUT:

It is time to distribute a handout/materials to participants. These can be found at the end of each lesson if it includes a handout. Make copies in advance!



### WRITE ON FLIP CHART:

The main points are included in PowerPoint presentations. In the event you do not have access to a computer/projector, write examples and instructions on flip chart paper in the front of the room.



### GROUP DISCUSSION:

It is time to prompt participants with questions or dialogue for group discussion.



### INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY:

It is time for an activity, like scenarios or a game. These activities help participants feel more connected to the information.



### INSTRUCTIONS:

Read information or directions aloud to the groups.



### WATCH THE VIDEO:

Each lesson includes videos to help introduce the topic and engage viewers to take part in the lessons. It is important to make sure you test them in advance to make sure the video and audio work on your technology.

# Lesson 8: Talk to a Sister

This lesson helps members learn more about how to approach a sister who needs help. This lesson is important in helping members be prepared to assist their sisters in need. One of the most common dynamics in sisterhood is seeing that someone needs help, but not necessarily knowing what to do or say. The goal of this lesson is to give members information that can assist them as they try to help their sisters or friends.

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## FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of chapter operations or campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

## TIME NEEDED:

23 minutes



## OBJECTIVES:

- Demonstrate what actions are helpful to approach a sister, friend, family member or partner who needs help.
- Identify the differences between what a friend can do and what can only be done by a mental health professional.

## SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Members will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will be show a PowerPoint presentation and play a video during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.
- *If facilitating virtually, you should practice the presentation on your video conference platform to ensure the PowerPoint, video, microphone and sound are all working accordingly. You should read the Purpose of Lesson below and review the facilitation guide to be aware of exercises that will need to be adjusted to the virtual experience.*

## GROUP SIZE:

Groups should be no larger than 10 to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.

- Before the lesson begins, ask members to count off into groups of 10 (or fewer) and then move to different areas of the room.
- We recommend placing a trusted member or chapter officer in each group who can help follow instructions and facilitate small group discussion.
- If your chapter has more than 150 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.
- *If facilitating virtually, use the breakout room feature of your video conference platform to create groups.*



#### **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Projector and screen
- “Talk to A Sister” PowerPoint
- “Talk to A Sister” video
- For each person: One notecard and Talk to a Sister handout

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS LESSON

### PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the eighth lesson is to help members understand how to approach a sister who is experiencing a mental health issue. Friends often share their emotions with each other and don't seek professional help. This means that friends are on the front lines of mental health and need guidance on ways to be able to navigate challenging situations.

The first exercise is designed to engage members by allowing them to share stories from their own personal lives and see how common it is for them to be in scenarios in which they are attempting to help their friends. Members will be given a notecard. On the notecard, they will write down a time when they tried to help a friend. They will share what the friend was doing, how they tried to help and if it worked or didn't work.

Members will not sign their names on the notecards. If your group is smaller than 25 people, you can collect the cards, shuffle them, pass them back out and have each sister read the card they have out loud to the whole group. If the group you are facilitating with is larger than 25, you should break members into small groups and have them do this exercise in their small groups.

- *If facilitating virtually, facilitator or host will use the video conference platform's annotation tool while sharing their screen or using a whiteboard to substitute the notecard activity (account administrator should confirm annotation is enabled in meeting settings). Please review [Zoom Resource: Behind Happy Faces](#) for more details.*

This exercise engages members and reminds them how common it is to try to help a sister. Oftentimes the cards have extremely challenging situations. It's important to remind members that many of us care about our friends and there are times when we don't know what to do. You can ask members what they have done when they don't know what to do and lead a brief conversation about how it feels to be in that situation. This activity makes the rest of the lesson real as members can think about the friend they tried to help for the next exercise.

The second exercise involves a handout that members will complete in small groups. The handout covers how to approach a sister by letting them know you care about them, asking open-ended questions, exploring what to do if they do not seek help and if the situation gets worse, discussing how to take care of herself and reminding members that they can't be their sister's therapist. The first step is to let a sister know you care about them to try and lessen their defensiveness when informing them that someone is concerned they has a mental health issue. Asking open-ended questions instead of yes-or-no questions is

important to have sisters talk about what is happening.

Knowing who to talk to or what to do if a sister refuses to get help is critical because involving other people may be necessary. Oftentimes when a friend's mental health is going downhill, it's common for their friends' mental health to also suffer. Writing down tips for self-care during these situations is helpful. Lastly, it's important to note that a friend wouldn't be able to treat a friend's broken leg and they can't treat their friend's mental health issues.

This lesson is for how to approach a sister in most situations, except for suicide. Lesson 9 provides members more support and what actions are needed when someone is having suicidal ideations. For this lesson, empowering young women with this information can help them feel more prepared when they know someone is struggling and needs help.

### **FACILITATOR TIPS:**

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to do the following:

1. Connect to members early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it if you're comfortable doing so. Let members know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the members see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the members may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give members too much time, they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep members focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for members to identify how to work on mental health, but do not let lessons become therapy. There's a difference between members identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want to start conversations but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.

5. Focus on connecting members to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team-building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let members know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Members who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your organizations are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a sister is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is OK to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other members. Remind all members that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise; however, you might find that the group you are facilitating wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is OK to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

## FACILITATOR NOTES:

As members enter the room, assign them to small groups. Give each member a notecard and each group two copies of the Talk to a Sister handout.

- *If facilitating virtually, chapter will facilitate the notecard activity via the annotation tool in the video conference platform to allow for anonymous sharing. Facilitator should create a whiteboard page and ask members to select the text annotation tool. From there, members can select Text and type their response onto the screen. For a larger group, facilitator should create multiple whiteboard pages. The Talk to a Sister handout will need to be individually shared with members.*



## TALK TO A FRIEND VIDEO (2 MINUTES)

- To start this, let's watch a video that explains the purpose of this lesson.
- Play the "Talk to a Friend" video for the large group. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

## EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)

### INTRODUCTION:

- We're going to go through a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for members. Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Sixty-seven percent of college students first disclose suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges to a friend. That means you are all on the front lines of mental health.
- The goal of this lesson is to make it easier for sisters to talk about mental health and get the help they need. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In this small group activity, you will share a time you intervened in a friend's life because you were concerned about them.
- You will do this completely anonymously, but it requires trust and a willingness to share. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- I'm going to read the instructions and then you can get started.



### INSTRUCTIONS:

- On your notecard, write down what your friend was doing that led you to feel you needed to intervene. For example, it could be after a break-up, when someone wasn't doing well in school or another situation. If you have never helped a friend in this situation, write about a time you think you could have helped.

- Next, write down if your attempts to help that friend worked or didn't work.
- Pass all of the cards to one person in the group.
- That person will shuffle the cards and pass one to each member.
- Then read the cards aloud to the group.
- Go around the group again and have each member say one word or theme that stuck with them about helping a friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



### SHARE:

Let's have several groups share some themes they heard as they did this exercise.  
**CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

### SUMMARIZE:

- We did this exercise to show how common it is to intervene in a friend's life. While we want to help, we're not always successful in doing this.
- There are a lot of reasons why we may or may not be successful. The next exercise is designed to help us better understand how to approach a friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

## EXERCISE 2 (10 MINUTES)



### INSTRUCTIONS:

- This next exercise will help us understand how to approach a sister experiencing a mental health challenge.
- This could mean talking to a sister who has anxiety or depression, went through a break-up, got rejected, is drinking or abusing drugs, or other similar situations.
- These exercises are not intended for someone who you think is suicidal. We will address that in lesson 9, Before the Breakdown. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In your groups, think about the following scenario: You notice a change in your sister's behavior that causes you concern. They're not eating regularly. They are constantly stressed. You feel like they are hiding their emotions.
- You will take 5 minutes to discuss the questions on the Talk to a Sister handout to help you better understand how to approach your sister.
- After your group has answered the questions, a representative from each group will report your answers to the large group. I'll let you know some positive answers.  
**CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- *Give them 5 minutes to write on their handouts and discuss as a small group. Then come together as one large group to discuss their answers.*



## FACILITATOR NOTES:



### Share:

After everyone is done with the worksheet, ask several groups how they responded to each question.

### Summarize:

The questions from the handout are listed below, along with positive answers to review with the chapter. After facilitating sharing for each question, summarize the recommended responses/answers for the chapter.

**Write down five ways you can express you're having this conversation because you care about your sister.**

It's important to approach your sister by letting them know you care about them, because it can help someone feel more comfortable to talk about what is wrong and ways to seek help. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

**Acceptable answers to this question should include:**

- "You're not doing the things you used to do, and I'm concerned about you."
- "I'm your sister and want to make sure you're OK."
- "I know you would do the same for me."
- "Sometimes people don't think these kinds of things can get better, but it's important to try."
- "I know it can be hard to talk about these things, but it's the only way that you can find a way to address this." **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

**Write down five open-ended questions you could ask your friend to help them talk about what they are going through.**

Open-ended questions are helpful because they allow your sister to talk to you about what is wrong. It's helpful to let them say everything they want and listen to them.

**CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

**Acceptable answers to this question should include:**

- "How are you?"
- "What have you been thinking about?"
- "Is there anything stressing you out right now?"
- "What do you feel has changed in your life?"
- "How have you been feeling?"

- “Tell me about what is happening to you.”
- “What can I do for you?” **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

**Write down five steps you can take if your sister refuses to get help and their situation gets worse.**

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- Talk to a counselor about steps you can take.
- Research the problem to see what might work for other people in a similar situation.
- Never give up.
- Let them know you care and your door is always open for them.
- Keep listening to anything they say.
- Don’t judge them. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

**Write down six things you can do to take care of yourself while your sister is in a mental health crisis.**

As you are trying to help a sister, you may not be able to sleep because you are texting them all night. You stop doing normal things like eating, studying and working out to be there for your sister. List steps you would take to better care for your mental health needs while helping your sister. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- Get sleep.
- Talk to a counselor about how your sister’s mental health is impacting your life.
- Exercise.
- Make time for yourself.
- Do something fun.
- Write about your emotions.
- See other friends or family.
- Practice yoga or meditation. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

### **SUMMARIZE:**

- When reaching out to a sister, it is important to establish trust and a system to be able to help them.

- Being aware of their feelings and learning how to effectively engage them leads to more success in getting her the help they need. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

#### **WRAP-UP:**

- Mental health challenges are extremely individualized. It can be hard to know exactly how to reach someone.
- If you're concerned about a sister, friend or family member, one of the best things you can do is go to the counseling center and talk to a counselor about the person to find out more about support options.

Please remind members that they should take the survey at the link provided. Show the QPR code on the screen and ask for confirmation that members took the post-test.

[https://corexmstcmk6ytnfrbb6.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_50CU0PA1vbCPvV3](https://corexmstcmk6ytnfrbb6.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50CU0PA1vbCPvV3)



# Lesson 8 Handout

List five ways you can tell your sister you're having this conversation because you care about them.

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List five steps you can take if your sister refuses to get help and their situation gets worse.

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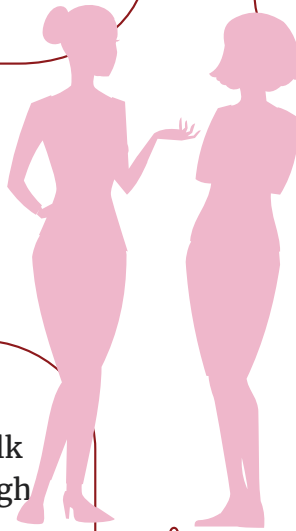
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Write down five open ended questions to help your sister talk about what they are going through

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List six things you can do to take care of yourself while your sister is dealing with a mental health crisis.

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