

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
COMFORT AND CONNECTION

Showing Up

FOREWORD BY

DR. JOHN DRAPER

Director of the National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline, Vibrant



BY JEN MARR
WITH SKYE QUINN

SHOWING UP

**A Comprehensive Guide
to Comfort & Connection**

Written by Jen Marr, Founder
of Inspiring Comfort LLC, and
designed by Skye Quinn, TIME.

Foreword by Dr. John Draper,
Executive Director of National
Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

How do we “show up” for coworkers, friends, classmates, family, acquaintances, and even strangers when we are all struggling?

It has never been more challenging to know what to say and do when those around us are hurting. We can feel empathy and compassion, but yet allow fear, doubt, and burnout to take over and paralyze us from connecting with each other. Our intentions may be good, but we don't have the skills to know how to break through what we call the Awkward Zone™.

Experts in the mental health field know the power of human connection – especially as we emerge from the pandemic. We need a tribe of people that show up for us when we can't show up for ourselves. We can't self-care our way out of this.

It takes social connectedness – the reciprocal relationships within our homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and communities — to ultimately bring about our collective emotional resilience.

Showing Up breaks it all down. It uncovers the behaviors that get us off track and outlines the science of how human care works. It equips individuals, leaders, and organizations to break through the Awkward Zone so that people in your life know that you care. Filled with evidence-based tools and strategies, as well as touching stories, this book is a guide to bringing strength and hope to others and ourselves.

Showing Up

The Creators of Showing Up

Jen Marr is a Speaker, Author, and Founder and CEO of Inspiring Comfort. She has utilized her 30 years of experience in business, leadership development, and the healthcare industry to research, develop, and offer solutions to our current mental health crisis.

Ten years ago, Jen had a front row seat to the Sandy Hook tragedy and to the Boston Marathon bombing. She immediately began working in crisis response and recovery efforts. She saw first-hand the need for ongoing support for those who are struggling. In doing this, she realized there is a massive gap between people who are struggling and people who want to help, but don't know how. This is when **Inspiring Comfort** was born.

Since then, Jen has been immersed in trauma research and developing programs that address this gap. Her work in the field of human connection has made indelible impact on the lives of countless people. She is passionate about furthering the science of human connection and has worked with researchers and thought leaders across the country to cultivate cultures of care through the critical life skill of comfort.

This movement is taking root in notable organizations including the White House Leadership Development Program, the National Suicide Lifeline, Georgetown University, Northeastern University, The New York Office of Mental Health, and the American Association of Suicidology.

Skye Quinn is the Senior Design Coordinator at TIME, where she has been involved in producing its iconic weekly covers since 2005.

During her tenure at TIME, Skye has styled several TIME book projects including *Mindfulness*, *How Dogs Think*, *The Science of Emotions*, *Secrets of Longer Living*, *Discovering Heaven: How Our Visions of the Afterlife Shape How We Live Today*, the *100 Most Influential Images of All Time* and over a dozen others.

After designing *Paws to Comfort* with Jen Marr, she joined Inspiring Comfort as a Senior Partner.

CONTACT: Kelly Shannon kelly@inspiringcomfort.com | info@inspiringcomfort.com

What Experts Are Saying About *Showing Up*

"In our new reality of constant change in how we work and communicate, connection is more important than ever. As we adapt to this new world, we cannot leave human skills behind. Being a trend setter means being a trend breaker. This book illuminates the opportunity at hand to break the trends of loneliness and isolation and set a trend of meaningful connections and caring for others."

Keith A. Grossman, President, TIME

"As we emerge from these unprecedented times, the role of a leader is changing. More than ever, leaders need to connect with people in an authentic way and show they care. This book is a guide to developing this essential skill and brings a timely and 'heart-first' perspective to the role of a modern leader."

Kellyn Smith Kenny, EVP, Chief Marketing & Growth Officer, AT&T Communications

"What a beautiful, necessary book. Jen and Skye show that there isn't one 'right' way to provide comfort, but instead give us unique, concrete ways to create connection and help lift each other up. I am so grateful to have this resource as a guide to help support all the circles of my community."

Susan Zimmerman, Speaker Community Director at TED

"Constant crises, anxieties, and the need for comfort have become the unfortunate norm both at home and in the workplace. Jen Marr's *Showing Up* not only provides everyday people the tools to triage imminent crises but also builds the capacity to support friends, family, colleagues, and most importantly, themselves."

Scott W. Fischer, Crisis Management Lead, Accenture

"If you want to learn more about the power of human connection as a means to bring comfort in a time when such connection can be rare and fleeting, this book is for you."

Joseph E. Auon, President, Northeastern University, and author, *Robot - Proof: Higher Education in the age of Artificial Intelligence.*

What's Inside *Showing Up*

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THE ACTION GAP

EMPATHY, SYMPATHY, COMPASSION, AND THE ACTION GAP

I never set out to do this work. This work found me after years of observing how those hurting hurt even more when people around them don't know how to adequately support them. After almost ten years of being a practitioner of care—giving, learning, researching, feeling, needing, and teaching how to care for others—I want to share what I am learning.

EMPATHY, SYMPATHY, AND COMPASSION

Needing to feel cared for and feeling the need to care for others are at the core of our humanity.

Empathy, sympathy, and compassion are at the foundation of these needs. However, empathy, sympathy, and compassion are emotions, and emotions can also get in our way when it comes to actually putting these needs into action.

The dictionary lists empathy, sympathy, and compassion as nouns, not verbs—things, not actions—and so acting on that “thing” can get tricky. Feelings of awkwardness can take over and paralyze us. Feelings of fear can cause us to doubt what to do when we don't have the skills and tools to know how to do it.

How can you best learn to act on your emotions (your nouns) in a way that brings

appropriate support to those hurting? With verbs, of course! In the case of acting on empathy, sympathy, and compassion, comfort is the strongest, most resilient community-building verb out there (more on that in the next section).

Think of it this way. In the last section, I spoke about the needs of those struggling with tragic life events. They need to be seen, heard, validated, loved, understood, comforted. To be cared for is to have actions applied to you. It's impossible to be “empathied” or “compassioned” by someone else. These aren't even words because nouns don't act.

I started on this journey of comfort because I was observing that it wasn't enough to feel these critical emotions. What people did with these feelings mattered.



SHOWING UP MINDSET

IT STARTS WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET

"To add value to others, one must first value others."

-JOHN MAXWELL

While we were developing our Inspiring Comfort programming, it was critical for us to create an environment where everyone can thrive, especially people like Sam, who start with only apathy in their hearts. The foundation must be grounded in human values, an atmosphere of trust, security, and belonging.

The great truth here is that regardless of the emotions we are feeling, we can follow a process to show care. This, in turn, results in someone being grateful for what we did while we feel satisfied that we helped another person.

With that in mind, all programming we do begins with reviewing the right mindset needed to show care. In our youth programming, we call these our Comfort, Care and Connection Rules and Guidelines and require students to review them at the beginning of every session together.

This is what happened with Sam. He agreed to these principles on day one and reread them at the start of each session, allowing his walls to gradually break down. Putting others before ourselves allows these positive emotions to be cultivated, which is truly the best self-care of all.

THE SHOWING UP MINDSET



IT'S ALWAYS WITH YOU

It's very common in our awkwardness to assume someone is "getting over it" or is "moving on" or "getting back to normal" after a life changing event. *This is where we can start changing our perspective.*

When we remove "getting over it", "moving on" and "getting back to normal" from our thought process and replace our thinking with "it's always with you", we change everything.



"GETTING OVER IT"

Puts up a big dark wall, denying most reflection and conversation on the topic.

"MOVING ON"

Discourages looking back, marching blindly forward.

"GETTING BACK TO NORMAL"

Is sometimes mistaken for finding a way to go on.

"ALWAYS WITH YOU"

Breaks that wall down and opens a beautiful door for preserving memories, accepting and providing comfort, and building relationships based on the memories and pain.

"ALWAYS WITH YOU"

Takes the past and seamlessly weaves it into the present and future, using each day, the bad days with the good days, to bring together the full story.

"ALWAYS WITH YOU"

Allows for true resiliency by identifying and accepting a "new normal" and living life as it is now.

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TEN COMFORT MISCONCEPTIONS

These may be some of the most important tidbits in this book for you to remember.

MISCONCEPTION	WHY
1 They are "over it," have "moved on," or should be over it or should move on.	People never "get over" trauma and loss. They are on a whole new journey.
2 You know how they feel.	Pain and loss are like fingerprints. No two are the same. People's response to the same or a similar situation can be dramatically different.
3 Giving them some space is a good thing.	Space grows isolation and loneliness. Unless they ask for it, don't assume they want it.
4 Giving them advice will help them.	Advice is the big no-no. Please don't go there unless they ask you for it.
5 Cheering them up is what they need.	Changing the mood will put up a wall between you. Being present with someone and validating what they are experiencing is most helpful.
6 They are faking it or exaggerating their struggle for attention.	People fake being okay way more.
7 If you bring up the struggle, it will upset them.	When people don't bring up the struggle, people feel isolated and unheard for.
8 There is a timeframe for healing, and they are abiding to that.	There is No Set Timeframe For Healing. End. Of. Story.
9 Saying the name of someone who passed will make them upset.	Those who have experienced deep loss don't want that person to be forgotten. Say the name.
10 They can replace a loss to help relieve their pain. (i.e., have another baby, get another dog, etc.)	No "new" anything will take the place of a loss. This can be seen as very dismissive and hurtful.

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IT'S
ALWAYS
WITH YOU

SUPPORT IS A LONG-TERM ENDEAVOR

“What’s even more messed up than funerals, is the way people treat you after the funeral. Like you’re diseased or something.”

—DENISE JADEN, LOSING FAITH

RIGHT AWAY IS NOT ALWAYS THE RIGHT WAY.

When someone is dealing with a life-changing event and is in need of care and support, people tend to provide support in accordance with a pattern that has emerged over the past few decades.

When we take time to recognize this, it makes all the difference in how we support those who need us. It takes the pressure off of doing everything right away.

One of the most important aspects of comfort to remember is that right away is not

always the right way. Don’t get me wrong, we should always acknowledge a tragedy, crisis, or loss when it occurs, but please just make sure the beginning of your support is just that—the beginning. Follow that up with many acts of care in the months and years ahead.

In the beginning, people will appreciate the fact that you reached out and won’t remember much more. In the long run, people will remember every detail, looking at each action with deeper and deeper appreciation.

TYPICAL SUPPORT CYCLE

The First Weeks

(a.k.a. The Comfort Deluge):

1. You learn of a loss, tragedy, or crisis.
2. News spreads quickly through social media, email, texts, and phone calls.
3. Cards, flowers, money, GoFundMe links, meals, and all sorts of things are sent.
4. People come together and support those involved by attending wakes and funerals and/or visiting those in the hospital.

A Month Later and Beyond

(a.k.a. The Comfort Void):

1. The supporters move on with their busy lives and mostly forget.
2. Those impacted the most by the loss or crisis begin to come out of their shock and try to grasp their new life.
3. These struggling the most search for a new normal and are left to pick up the pieces.
4. As time goes on, these hurting people feel more alone and more isolated as they feel invisible and forgotten.
5. Over time, previous friends will fall away as the life change makes it hard for them to know how to be there.

6 TIPS TO MASTER ONGOING SUPPORT

1



Acknowledge

In the first few weeks, just send a card or a text, make a call, or leave a token of care (unless you are a close friend or family member, in which case you should be on hand to help them navigate these first weeks).

2

Show Up

If there is a wake/funeral, be there. If there are visiting hours in the hospital or care facility, stop by.

3



Don't Be in a Rush

Resist the urge to do everything right away. Save some support for weeks, months, and years later.

Remember the Marble Jar

Many acts of care over a long period of time are most needed and will bring you both fulfillment and a deeper friendship.

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Mark Your Calendar

Mark important dates to remember (birthdays, anniversaries, special occasions) and reach out on those dates. Create a monthly event with them (a walk together, lunch, coffee, a mani/pedi, etc.).

4



Think Outside the Box

There are always many people impacted. Think of family members, friends, work colleagues, and many others who could use care.



SUPPORT IS A LONG TERM ENDEAVOR