

ONE of the downsides of life in a new country can be the realisation that family and trusted friends have been left behind, and suddenly you are out there on your own.

At first it's barely noticeable. After all, the first few months or even years of adjusting to a different culture, language and environment, can be all-consuming and fun. There are new places to see, quaint villages, events to partake in and the sheer bliss of spending all your free time with your partner and children.

Then after a while, normality takes over, and suddenly you find yourself doing the same old chores, perhaps having the same disagreements, the only difference being the hard fact that Mum, close friends are no longer available for a heart to heart complete with chocolate digestives and a cup of tea.

Let's face it; we all need a shoulder to lean on from time to time. It may not be a major life or death moment, just a chance to unburden when things are really driving you mad. It's not a problem confined to women; men have their own worries as well. Sometimes it is actually worse for a man, as an admission of difficulty is often perceived as a sign of weakness.

It can be really hard to carry on as if nothing is the matter because you have no-one to con-



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## Help is just a call away

Call SOS Help on 01 46 21 46 46 for a listening service in English

hide in, without appearing to be whinging, or unable to cope with, what may seem to others, a minor problem.

That's where SOS Help comes in. For many years now they have been providing just such an 'un-burdening' service. A friendly voice, and above all a listening ear, can mean so much to someone who is really at the end of their

tether. And when that voice is speaking your language it is even more welcome.

What is even more beneficial is the knowledge that on the end of a phone line is someone who has been specially trained to offer non-judgemental support just when you need it most.

SOS Help is a non-profit organisation linked

to the Samaritans, and is part of the French SOS Amitié Federation.

The listeners have backgrounds from many different countries, so there will nearly always be someone from a similar cultural background to the caller.

SOS Help is able to provide help to anyone who feels particularly isolated or alienated in France. If you are in need of a listener, call the helpline on 01 46 21 46 46 and share your problem with them. Lines are open every day from 15.00 to 23.00.

For more information visit the website at [www.soshelpline.org](http://www.soshelpline.org)

■ **SOS Help could use helpers outside Paris. The next time you are organising a book sale, or a coffee morning, why not channel any profits towards helping to maintain the service SOS Help? Spread the word to help raise awareness of the service - and help reach those who may need confidential emotional support. SOS Help answers over a hundred calls a week, and although the listeners all give freely of their time, training and administration costs are ongoing expenses so any help with donations or fundraising are very welcome.**