



ASKING FOR HELP


A simple guide for young people, to help
you talk about how you're feeling

We're talking mental health.

We all have days when we feel anxious, worried, low, sad or angry. Having emotions like this are a normal part of life in response to challenging things that happen to us, and can let us know that we need to take action.

If you've been dealing with difficult feelings on your own for a while, particularly if you're finding it difficult to do the things you need to do, such as sleeping well, socialising and studying, then reaching out and asking for help is important, but how?

Pause, take a breath, and think about how you are feeling and who you might talk to.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black pen and writing on a white notepad. The hand is wearing a brown sleeve. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

It's OK to start small and say, 'I'm not having a good day'.

Help our resources have a greater impact. Please consider sharing this booklet with someone who might also benefit from it instead of recycling it.

Taking the step to ask for help

THINK ABOUT WHO'S BEST TO TALK TO

Reaching out for help can feel scary, especially when you're already feeling anxious or low. You may not be sure who to turn to. Or you may be worried about reaching out, particularly if you've tried talking about how you feel to someone before and it didn't go as well as you'd hoped.

There are lots of reasons why you might struggle with asking for help. You might worry about how others might react. Stigma, shame and embarrassment can be real barriers – for example thinking that having mental health issues is a sign of weakness or that boys shouldn't cry. This can be made worse if you're also worried about things like upsetting members of your family or what might happen once you've shared something and who might find out.

Worrying about what others might say or how they will react can really put people off talking or sharing. But, in the end, your worries might escalate to the point that they become too big to carry and can have a real impact on your ability to cope and thrive. No matter how big or small, your worry is important to you and sharing it with someone is a first great step to dealing with it.

You may have an idea of who you could talk to, perhaps a parent or carer, a friend, or a teacher or another trusted adult, but you may be worried about how to start a conversation. We hope these tips will help you to overcome some of these barriers and find ways to reduce the worries around asking for help, what to say and how to say it.

You might also find it helpful to watch this Childline video of young people discussing when and how to ask an adult for help: <https://youtu.be/XoslABBhORU>



PREPARING TO ASK FOR HELP

Once you've decided who might be the best person to talk to first, you might want to think about and write down a few things to help guide you before you start to talk. For example, you might want to tell the person that you've been having a difficult time and you'd like to find a time to talk to them about it.

Before you meet them, think about what you need from talking to them. You may not be sure what this is, but it could include:

- Space to talk about things that are happening in your life that you're concerned about.
- Talking about difficult thoughts or feelings.
- Someone to just listen to you and understand you.
- Talking about what you could do to start feeling better.
- Discussing options to get extra support if you need it.

GETTING READY TO REACH OUT

Once you've decided who to talk to, the next step is reaching out. It's OK to feel nervous but please don't let this put you off reaching out. There's no right or wrong way to do it – you may feel more comfortable sending a message asking to talk, or you may decide to wait until there's a quiet moment to ask for help.

Try to find a time to meet face to face, or if this isn't possible or it's not what you feel comfortable doing, meeting

virtually, having a chat on the phone or by sending messages is OK too.

Writing down a few bullet points can help you remember what you want to talk about and make sure you cover what's concerning you most. You might also find it helpful to write in more detail by 'downloading' your thoughts and feelings into words on a page. This may help you, and the person you've chosen to talk to, have a better understanding of what you've been going through.

You may decide you feel more comfortable giving the person what you have written to read, rather than reading it out yourself. That's fine too.

Childline has some brilliant advice on how to ask for help, including a conversation starter letter template that you can use to help you write down what you want to say: [childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/getting-help/asking-adult-help](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/getting-help/asking-adult-help)

You may not know what to say or where to start. It's OK to start by saying something like:

'I'm having a hard time and I don't know what to say.'

'This is hard for me to say, but I have something important to tell you.'

'I need some advice on something I'm stressed about.'

WHAT IF I HAVE NO ONE TO TALK TO?

If you're finding it difficult to identify someone in your life who you feel comfortable talking to, there are lots of places to turn to with people who want to listen to you and what you're going through. Here are some of them:

Childline: a free, private and confidential service for anyone aged under 19. You can contact them anytime on **0800 1111** or go online to visit their message boards or to use their 1-2-1 chat: [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk). The website has been designed by teenagers and is full of useful advice and information.

The Mix: a free and confidential service for the under 25s to help you take on any challenge you might be facing. You can contact them on

0808 808 4994, 4pm-11pm every day or go online to visit their message boards or to use their 1-2-1 chat: [themix.org.uk](https://www.themix.org.uk)

If you don't feel that you can talk to someone, you could text **YM on 85258**, which is a free, confidential, anonymous text support service provided by Young Minds. You can text from wherever you are in the UK, 24/7.

There's a more complete list of organisations that offer direct support on page 11.

Even if you've identified someone to talk to, you might want to call one of these helplines first, so that you can practise talking to someone you don't know. You might find that easier than talking to someone you know and care about and it can help you while you get ready to take the next step.



When you're ready to talk

FINDING THE RIGHT TIME

Finding the right time to talk, where you won't be interrupted and the other person has time to listen, may be tricky. Letting the person know that you need to arrange a time to talk to them in private, without being interrupted, may help.

They may not have time right away, or may only be able to give you a short amount of time before arranging a longer time later on to talk more fully. If they can't talk now, it doesn't mean they don't care about you; ask them when would be a good time to talk and come back then.

Alternatively, you may find it easier to choose a time to talk when you're doing something else, like walking the dog or washing the dishes. You may find it easier to talk if you feel there's less attention directly on you and your worries.

MANAGING THE CONVERSATION

It's very normal to be concerned about what other people think about you. When we're distressed, we're also more likely to think that other people will be thinking negatively about us, even when there's no evidence this is true.

You may be concerned that others are judging you, especially if they're not sure how to respond to you. Sometimes people don't respond or listen in the way you'd hoped because of their own worries, concerns or wellbeing in that moment. If they can't give you the support you need, it can be helpful to remind yourself that it's likely to be something to do with their own issues, rather than not wanting to support you.

If you feel that the conversation didn't work out as well as you'd hoped, please remember there are other people you

can turn to who have more experience of having supportive conversations about mental health and wellbeing – like at Childline or The Mix.

If you feel someone has dismissed what you've said and you feel they haven't taken it seriously, this doesn't mean that it's not serious to you. Keep speaking out, even if it means talking to someone else, until you find someone who is able to listen and support you.

IT'S OK TO CRY

However you react, it's OK. It's natural to cry or feel angry. None of these feelings are a bad thing. What's important is that you have taken a positive step in sharing how you feel.



WHAT MAY HAPPEN AFTER YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO SOMEONE

There are different types of help available for you to choose and try – it's your choice, and it's OK to try different ones, or different people, until one feels right for you.

If you need a bit of support, a parent or carer, friend, member of school staff, another trusted adult or mental health organisation or helpline could help you. However, if you need more support, you could ask staff at school or your GP. They can tell you what mental health support is available.

If you talk to someone you know through their professional role, such as a teacher or adviser, one of the first things they may do is to tell you that they may need to tell someone. That's because they'll need to ensure you receive the support you need to help you to get on top of things.

You can talk to them about who needs to know what – but try to remember it's a good thing that people understand what's going on so they can help you, though it might seem a bit scary at first.

Remember, if it doesn't work when seeking help from one person, it's OK to speak to someone else.

None of these feelings are a bad thing.



THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN NEXT

It's a big step to ask for help and it usually means that on some level you're ready for things to improve.

Do you have any idea of what you might like to happen as a result of the conversation you're planning? It might include:

- Getting support to tell others, such as a family member or a friend.
- Support to help you talk through your worries and concerns.
- Support on where to go next.
- You're not sure, you just can't carry on with how things are.



AND REMEMBER...

Even if you've gone looking for help, it can be hard to accept it – but try. Trust the person who you've spoken with to help you to take the first steps to make things better. They won't be able to fix everything all in one go, but they can work with you to start to make things change.

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP

You may feel you need to seek professional help, or the person you've spoken to might suggest that you do. First of all, find out what options are available to you. You might have to wait a bit for support, depending on what you need and what's available. If this happens, it doesn't mean your difficulties aren't important.

Some mental health services might be able to give you information about other ways to get support straight away, for example support groups or phone/text lines.

If you're worried about having a face-to-face appointment, many health services have online or phone appointments.

It's a good idea to check with the mental health professional you're speaking to what sort of thing they might share with other people, for example a family member. They will keep information about your mental health private, unless they are worried about your (or someone else's) safety.

Mental health professionals are trained to listen and respect what you say, without judging you.

If you've spoken with a mental health professional and don't feel better straight away, try not to be put off – it can take time for things to improve.



Many health services have online or phone appointments.



What others have said

"She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn't interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that ... it would be a turning point."

"When I first started talking I realised I wasn't alone."

"[It] was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said 'That must have been really tough' – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me."

"I was worried how she'd react, but my Mum just listened then said 'How can I support you?' – no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me."

Sources of support

As we don't provide clinical help to individuals, we have listed below some organisations which offer direct support:

CHILDLINE

Call: 0800 1111 (free line)

Online: [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)

Confidential listening, 1-2-1 chat, online message boards for under 19s.

BEAT EATING DISORDERS

Call: England 0808 801 0677

Scotland 0808 801 0432

Wales 0808 801 0433

Northern Ireland 0808 801 0434

Online: [beateatingdisorders.org.uk](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

(Phone or webchat 9am-midnight weekdays, 4pm-midnight weekends, 365 days a year.)

Support for individuals, families or friends with eating disorders.

MUSLIM YOUTH HELPLINE

Call: 0808 808 2008 (4pm - 10pm) every day

Email: help@myh.org.uk

Online: [myh.org.uk](https://www.myh.org.uk)

Faith and culturally sensitive confidential support by phone, live chat, WhatsApp or email for young Muslims in the UK.

SAMARITANS

Call: 116 123 (free line)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Online: [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)

Confidential and emotional support 24/7.

THE MIX

Call: 0808 808 4994

Text: THEMIX to 85258

Online: [themix.org.uk](https://www.themix.org.uk)

Support and advice for under 25s, including a helpline, crisis messenger service and webchat.

YOUNGMINDS

Text: YM to 85258

Online: [youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK experiencing a mental health crisis.

YOUTH ACCESS

Online: [youthaccess.org.uk](https://www.youthaccess.org.uk)

Young people's information, advice and counselling.

Inclusion here does not mean the Charlie Waller Trust recommends or endorses any of these organisations above others, nor can we guarantee that the organisation will have a solution to your particular problem.

All details correct at time of going to press.

Remembering Charlie

The Charlie Waller Trust was set up by the Waller family in 1997 to remember Charlie. We now work with thousands of parents, carers and teachers to help children and young people look after their mental health.

Learn more about us at charliewaller.org

GET IN TOUCH

hello@charliewaller.org
01635 869754

FIND OUT MORE

charliewaller.org

FOLLOW US



SUPPORTING US

If you have found this resource useful please consider donating to help us continue our work.



Text

To donate £10 Text 'CWT' to 70085

This costs £10 plus the cost of a standard rate message.



Online

Visit charliewaller.org/donate

The Charlie Waller Trust

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