

# Asking for help



## For teenagers

How do I ask for help if I am concerned about a mental health problem?

## For you

The first step is to accept that it's OK to need help.

- Before you speak to someone try and figure out what you need help with. It might be easier to write it down.
- Remember, you don't have to know the reasons why, you just need to be able to put into words or write down what you want help with.
- Now find someone you can talk to. Please keep in mind that although friends, family and teachers are often the first people teenagers approach, they are not trained professionals, and whilst most of the time they respond brilliantly because they know you, very occasionally they may not respond in the right way. When this happens, don't give up, keep talking until you have the answers that will help you.

## Talking to friends

Friends are often the first port of call.

- Whilst it is often easier to do this on social media, talking face-to-face about a mental health problem is much better. Find a good time and place to talk and make sure your friend hasn't got to rush anywhere.
- Before the talk, decide on what information you want to share.
- You might even want to practice what you would like to tell them.
- It's very useful to tell your friend what you need from them – do you want them to listen, or support you to get some professional help?
- Be prepared to answer their questions and also let them know when you are not comfortable to answer.
- Friends are not trained in responding accurately so be prepared for a variety of responses.
- Finally, be prepared to listen to friends. If they suggest it would be helpful for you to talk to someone who can help, give their suggestion some consideration.



## Telling a parent

Most people (even adults) are afraid to talk to their parents about a mental health problem.

- You may not want to upset them or imagine they might be angry, disappointed, sad or dismissive. Most teenagers feel their parents just won't understand.
- Try to plan what you are going to say to them first.
- You don't have to give them details if you don't want to. Start by telling them the symptoms you feel and how they have been impacting on you.
- You might want to have some resources such as the **stem4** website to point them towards if they need more information.
- Choose a time when they are not rushed and tell them from the start that you would like them to listen to what you have to share, and that you would like them to let you tell them everything without interruption.
- Be clear on what you would like from them.
- Sometimes it might be helpful to discuss things with an older sibling first and ask them to help you tell your parents.
- You can also talk to someone at your school, or your GP, and ask them to help you tell your parents.
- If telling is hard you can also write to them.



## Talking to a teacher

Talking about mental health is not easy, so it's important to choose a teacher you can trust and can talk to. The teacher you choose to confide in might be your form tutor, head of year or perhaps head of pastoral care.

- Prepare what you would like to say and what you would like from them once they know.
- Set up a time to talk. You might like to say something like, "I've got something private I'd like to talk to you about and wondered if there was a good time for me to set up a meeting with you?"
- You can ask at the beginning of the conversation as to whether they will be able to keep the conversation confidential. Teachers have to follow the school's safeguarding rules, so you may want to ask them if they have a duty to tell someone what you tell them and how it may be dealt with as a result.
- You don't have to tell a teacher all the details. You can describe the symptoms you feel and how they may be affecting you.
- Remember, teachers aren't trained mental health professionals. See your GP who can help you get professional support.

## Seeing your GP (General Practitioner)

You can visit your doctor at any age and about any issue. This includes seeing them for your mental health – it doesn't only have to be about your physical health.

To make an appointment:

- You can call your doctor's surgery and speak to a receptionist. The receptionist will first ask for your name, date of birth and address and very occasionally they may ask why you are calling. Whilst this is to help them make sure you see the right doctor, it can be difficult to explain this on the telephone, so you can do one of two things: Either say it's personal and you would like to explain it confidentially to the doctor face-to-face, or prepare a brief comment on what you want to say beforehand – it doesn't have to be a full explanation. You can give them your main symptoms such as feeling really tired or not sleeping.
- If you are over 16 you might be able to book an appointment online if your doctor has a system such as 'myGP' – you can check on the surgery website.
- A typical GP appointment is ten minutes. If you think you will need more time, ask to book a double appointment. You can see your doctor on your own.
- If you don't have a doctor you can register with one by yourself if you are 16 years old or above.
- To find a doctor, please visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk), look under GP services and with your postcode you should be able to find the doctor most local to you. You will have to go to the surgery and fill in a patient registration form.

Before you see the doctor prepare what you would like to say.

Check [www.DocReady.org](http://www.DocReady.org) for help with preparation and watch the short video called 'Find the Words' on [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

You can visit your doctor at any age and about any issue. This includes seeing them for your mental health – it doesn't only have to be about your physical health.



Turn over to find out what you should do on the day of your GP appointment.

## On the day of your GP appointment

- Make sure you are on time for your appointment.
- Make sure you tell your GP all of your concerns and share your notes if it is easier. You need to be honest to get the right help.
- Anything you say will be kept just between you if you are over 16, and if you are younger ask the GP about confidentiality – they will decide on a case by case basis.
- They will, however, keep you safe at all times and so will tell your parents or those responsible if you are at risk of harm, but will discuss this with you first.
- If you are over 18 you can give your GP consent to share information with your parents. This might mean writing them a letter or telling them to add this to your notes.

Don't give up if you feel your first appointment didn't work as well as you liked it to. You can always make another to explain more or you can make a time to see another doctor.

**Take steps to look after yourself. Ask for help early. You can do this!**

## Helplines

### Beat

Beating eating disorders.

**0808 801 0677**

**0808 801 0711** (Youthline)

**0808 801 0811** (Studentline)

### Bullying UK

Information about bullying: verbal, physical and cyber bullying.

**0808 800 2222**

### Childline

A free point of contact for children and young people who need advice either online or via telephone on a wide range of issues.

**0800 1111**

### Frank

Confidential information for anyone concerned about their own or someone else's drug misuse.

**0300 123 6600**

### Mind

Providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

**0300 123 3393**

### NSPCC

Keeping children and young people safe from a wide range of abusive situations.

**0808 800 5000**

**0800 1111** (Childline)



### Papyrus prevention of young suicide

Provide confidential support and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person.

**0800 068 4141**

### Relate

Relationship support for young people aged 16-25. Free online chat with a trained counsellor.

**www.relate.org.uk**

### Samaritans

Talk to the Samaritans any time you like, in your own way, and off the record – about whatever is getting to you.

**116 123**

### Stonewall

Information and advice for LGBT communities and their allies.

**08000 50 20 20**

### The Mix

Online guide for 16-25 year olds. Support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt and drugs.

**0808 808 4994**

### Young Minds

Supporting children and young people with emotional health and wellbeing concerns, offering a wide range of resources across a whole spectrum of issues.

**0808 802 5544** (Parents)





**stem4**

Wimbledon Business Centre  
Old Town Hall  
4 Queens Road  
London SW19 8YB

e: [info@stem4.org.uk](mailto:info@stem4.org.uk)  
[stem4.org.uk](http://stem4.org.uk)



Registered Charity Number 1144506

**stem4**  
stemming teenage mental illness  
supporting teenage mental health