



Asking for help

When it's time to talk about your mental health

We're talking mental health.

We all have days when we feel anxious, worried, sad or angry. Emotions like these 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 concentrating at work or sleeping well, then reaching out and asking for help is important. Talking to someone can help ensure you get the support you need to overcome the challenges you're facing.

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

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

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

Who can I talk to?

You might already know who you want to talk to. It could be:

- A friend or colleague.
- A family member or partner.
- Your manager.
- A mental health first aider (MHFA) if you have one at work.
- EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) or staff counselling.
- Your GP.

If you're not sure who to talk to, think about who you trust and feel comfortable talking to. Have you talked to someone in the past who's been particularly helpful?

Preparing to ask for help

Once you've decided who might be the best person to talk to, think about what you need from talking to them and what you want to tell them. You may not be sure what this is, but it might include:

- Space to talk about things that are happening in your life which are concerning you.

- A particular problem that you need to talk about.
- Talking about difficult thoughts or feelings.
- What has prompted you to ask for help now.
- Talking about what you could do to start feeling better.
- Discussing options to get extra support if you need it.

You might find it helpful to write down your thoughts.



Reaching out

Once you've thought about what you want from speaking to the person, the next step is to reach out. It's OK to feel nervous but please don't let this put you off. 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.

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for reaching out:

Try to find a time to meet face to face if that's possible but, if it's not, meeting virtually, having a chat on the phone or using Messenger is OK too.

It's a good idea to prepare before you have your first conversation. It sounds a bit strange, but you'll feel much more confident talking to someone if you've worked out what you want to say and tried saying it beforehand. Plus, it will help the person you've chosen to talk to have a better understanding of what you've been going through.

You could:

- Write down some bullet points.
- Draft a text message or email to yourself.
- Use a free online resource called DocReady (docready.org), where you'll find tools that help you prepare for the first time you see a doctor to discuss your mental health.

Have your notes with you so that you don't forget anything. And if you find yourself unable to talk about your issues, you could give your notes to the person you've chosen to talk to instead.

You could also give your notes to someone to read if you don't feel comfortable talking to someone in person.

You may not know what to say or where to start. It's OK to start by saying: "I'm having a hard time and I don't know what to say."



What if I have no one to talk to?

If you are finding it difficult to identify someone in your life who you feel comfortable talking to, there are lots of places with people who are there to listen and support you.

Take a look at the list of sources of support on page 11.

Even if you have identified someone you feel you can talk to, you can call an anonymous helpline like Samaritans and practise talking to someone you don't know – that can be easier than talking to someone you know and care about and can help you while you get ready to take the next step.

You can contact **Samaritans** anytime on **116 123** or online samaritans.org

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



When you're ready to talk

Finding the right time

It can be tricky to find the right time to talk, where you won't be interrupted and the other person has time to listen. 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.

Managing the conversation

You may feel really upset or overwhelmed when you start to talk. That's OK. Try to focus on your breathing and take it slow, if you can. You can always arrange another time, later on, if you're feeling overwhelmed or there are other things you need to discuss which you didn't have enough time for.

It's very normal to be concerned about what other people think about us. When we're distressed, we're also more likely to think that others will think negatively about us, even when there is no evidence that this is true. You may be concerned that others are judging you, especially if they're not sure how to respond.

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. The important thing is you have made a positive step in sharing how you feel.

If you feel that the conversation didn't work out as well as you'd hoped, please remember that there are other people you can turn to who may have more experience at being able to have supportive conversations about mental health and wellbeing, such as the Samaritans.

Know your rights about confidentiality

If you talk to someone you know through their professional role, one of the first things they might do is to tell you that they may not be able to keep confidentiality. 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 daunting at first.



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 once you've had the conversation? This might include:

- Getting support to tell others, for instance a family member or partner, your manager or your GP, friends or colleagues.
- First aid or medical help for self-harm injuries.
- Support to help you talk through your worries and concerns.
- Referral for specific treatment that you're already aware of.
- You're not sure, you just can't carry on with how things are.

Take a look at **Hub of Hope** for further support hubofhope.co.uk

None of these feelings are a bad thing.

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.



And remember...

Even if you've gone looking for help, it can be hard to accept it – but try. Trust the person that 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.

What others have said



Sources of support

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

ANXIETY UK

Online: anxietyuk.org.uk

Helpline: 03444 775 774

(Mon-Fri: 9:30am - 5.30pm)

Text support service: 07537 416905

Webchat: Ask Anxia button at the bottom right corner of the website

CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY (CALM)

Call: 0800 58 58 58

(5pm-midnight, 365 days a year)

Online: thecalmzone.net

Support, information and signposting anywhere in the UK via webchat or phone.

HUB OF HOPE

Online: hubofhope.co.uk

Put in your postcode and find help local to where you live for a range of difficulties.

MEN'S HEALTH FORUM

Online: menshealthforum.org.uk

Articles and information on men's health.

MIND INFOLINE

Call: 0300 123 3393 (9am-6pm.

Mon-Fri excluding bank holidays)

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Online: mind.org.uk

Information and signposting services about mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and advocacy services.

SAMARITANS

Call: 116 123 (free line)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Online: samaritans.org

Confidential and emotional support 24/7.

SHOUT

Text: SHOUT to 85258

Free confidential 24/7 text service, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere.

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

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie took his own life. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded the Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.

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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