

For Boys and Young Men



“He’s talking, but are you listening?”

Booklet for boys and young men on
asking for mental health support.

stem4i
supporting teenage mental health
Charity no 1144506

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INTRODUCTION

Every year, the charity Movember Europe devotes the month of November to raising awareness of issues impacting men's health and raising funds for projects that support these issues.

stem4, as a charity that exists to promote positive mental health in teenagers, are very concerned by the ongoing rates of mental ill health amongst boys and young men. We want boys and young men to know that there is help available and to empower those who care for them in how best to support them.

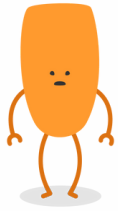
As part of [stem4's 2022 Movember campaign](#) they surveyed 1,100 boys and young men, exploring their experiences with mental health. This stem4 survey found that fear of shame or feeling 'weak' is deterring many boys and young men from seeking help for mental health problems. The survey also showed that many do not receive support when they ask for it. Over a third (37%) of boys and young men aged between 14 and 21 said they were currently experiencing mental health difficulties.

These results are concerning in terms of recognising how hard it is for boys and young men to come forward about their mental health in the first place, and then how difficult it must be when they do, to not receive recognition or help.

As a first step, it's essential that everyone recognises how important it is to be receptive to boys and young men's mental health challenges and to recognise that the first step in being able to do this is to listen to them when they express their concerns.

Speaking about mental health is not easy. Listening is often even harder. The focus of stem4's campaign for Movember 2023 is to provide some ideas and tips for boys and men on how to open up and, more importantly on how we can all listen better to them and know how to respond.

ABOUT BOYS' AND MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH



Key statistics

(stem4 2022 Movember [survey](#)):

- Over a third (37%) of boys and young men aged between 14 and 21 said they were currently experiencing mental health difficulties.
- The survey found that almost half (46%) of respondents would not ask for help for a problem that was making them upset, anxious or depressed, "even if things got really bad."
- When asked what was stopping them; 36% said courage, 32% said they "don't want to make a fuss" and 30% said they would feel weak and ashamed.
- A fifth (21%) worried that people would laugh or think less of them, and 14% said they would "feel less masculine."
- Meanwhile, 15% said they don't know how to ask for help.



Movember UK also [reports](#) an alarmingly high rate of male suicide of 3 in 4 suicides in the UK being men.

Movember UK seeks to look at '[mental health through a male lens, focusing on prevention, early intervention and health promotion. We're working towards a world where men take action to be mentally well, and are supported by those around them.](#)'

Many boys and young men feel they have to conform to male gender stereotypes which focus on 'strength', both physical and emotional, and encourages competition and advantage.

OPENING UP

Mental health lies on a spectrum ranging from good to unwell. This often makes it difficult to know when the right time might be to open-up about something that may be impacting them.

After all, everyone can feel anxious or low in mood.

Some general rules:

- A person doesn't have to be unwell to check things out. Sometimes 'a problem shared', does become a 'problem halved.'
- Set aside some time – being in a rush doesn't really work.
- Be prepared to repeat some of the points. You've mulled over matters for a while so you know what it is, but for the person listening it might be the first time they've thought about what you are saying, so they need time and explanation.
- Some people respond better than others. If you don't get the response you would like the first time, try again.

DR KRAUSE'S TOP TIPS...

1	Pick somewhere you feel relaxed – for example, arrange a walk or an activity.	5	Starting by stating that it's important to you, or that you are nervous can be helpful.
2	Practise in advance what you want to say. Note down some points if you feel it would help.	6	Start with small pieces of information otherwise all might not get addressed and you can also assess their reaction.
3	Set the scene. Tell the person you want to talk to what you would like – for example, 'please listen and then we can talk' so you don't get disrupted, or you could say you don't want them to feel under pressure to come up with a solution, just want them to listen.	7	Treat what you say as a series of discussions. This means you don't lose out on important detail and it's not too overwhelming.
4	Try the '3 times rule'. Say something important a minimum three times before you discard it.	8	Take time to process what's said. Take steps to change.

[stem4](#)

Conversation starters:

'I've not been myself lately.'

'I've not been on top of the world recently. In fact I've been quite down.'

'Do you think you could help me find some help to be less stressed/anxious/depressed?'

'I've been low in mood recently.'

'I've not been holding up that well under all the pressure I've been under.'

'I've been sleeping really badly recently because I've been overthinking. I think I need some professional support.'

'I'm not dealing well with (....) and would benefit from talking to someone. Do you think you might be able to help me find some names or tell me what I need to do?'



FOR THE LISTENER OF BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

Listening is a skill that needs practice. It's important not to mix listening with responding.

Listening is about being patient. It's about letting a person talk by being open and receptive.

DR KRAUSE'S TOP TIPS...

1

Initially engage through non-verbal communication, for example nodding.

2

The first step in verbal communication is to repeat back what you think you've heard to ensure you've listened correctly. This is called 'Active Listening'

3

Don't feel under pressure to respond with the right solution.

4

If you want to share your view, check out whether the person is responsive to this first. Sometimes people just want to talk.

5

Keep personal opinions and experiences minimal. This is an opportunity for the person talking to have space to do so.

6

If you want opportunity to talk as well, set up a different time and space to do so.

7

Ask the person talking what they might like help with.

8

Support them in getting there.

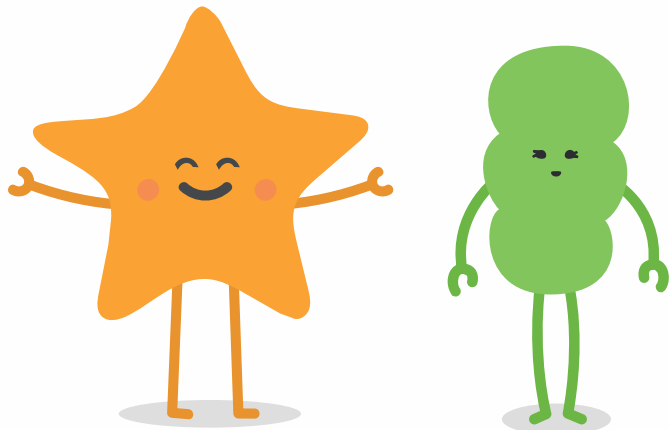
FRIENDS WATCH

HOW TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUR FRIENDS



FRIENDS
WATCH

Friendships are amongst the most valuable relationships we have. We often talk to friends about things we won't easily tell our family. Whilst friends can annoy or hurt us, they are also vital in keeping us going. It's not surprising that friends are pretty important in helping with our mental health. They can be a listening ear, help us feel grounded and encourage change.



Friends can be very persuasive in supporting change.

This doesn't mean taking on responsibility for change but enabling your friend to make the right contact with teachers, school nurses, school counsellors, their families or other support to start to make positive change.

You can also download Combined Minds, a free app to help friends provide mental health support.

Talk

@stem4org

When a friend is going through a difficult time it makes sense to encourage them to talk. This might be to you or to someone who can help. Listen to your friend and support them in speaking to a responsible adult. Do keep in mind that whilst 'a problem shared is a problem halved' when it comes to mental health, sharing a problem is not going to treat the problem, so make it your role to signpost (or direct) them to get help.

Tell

You might want to help your friend by finding out about what sort of resources are available and tell them about them. These resources might include names of people at school or in the community who can help, helpful websites or peer supporters in the school. Telling also includes looking after yourself. If your friend refuses to talk to someone and you remain concerned, you can tell someone in confidence about your concerns. This will ultimately help your friend.

Offer

Offer to support your friend in asking for help. This might be from their family, school or their GP. Sometimes when a friend is unwell you might find yourself automatically becoming a carer. Remember that you are their friend not their carer, so plan some fun 'friend activities' you can do together.

Look after yourself

Friendships work both ways and whilst good times together benefit both, difficult times can affect both too. If you feel that your friend's mental ill health is having a negative impact on your own mental health, then take steps to look after yourself. This may mean you take time to reflect on the changes in the friendship and how it has changed. It may mean having a break from supporting your friend and seeking some trusted adults for yourself.

@stem4org



HELPLINES

stem4 does not provide a counselling service and so regrettably we are unable to answer questions of a personal nature. Please contact your GP or call 111 or 999 should you have an urgent concern.

Beat

Beating eating disorders.

- 0808 801 0677 (Helpline)
- 0808 801 0711 (Youthline)
- 0801 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

Kooth

Kooth CAMHS support provides free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.

- 0300 123 6600

Mind

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

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

NSPCC

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

- 0808 800 5000
- 0800 1111 (ChildLine)

Papyrus

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

- 0800 068 41 41

Relate

Relationship support for young people aged 16-25 including support with their own relationship or a family relationship. Free on-line 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

Shout

Shout is a 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks in the UK, for anyone in crisis. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. The number to text is 85258.

- <https://giveusashout.org/>

Togetherall

Togetherall is an online community for people who are stressed, anxious or feeling low. The service has an active forum with round-the-clock support from trained professionals. You can talk anonymously to other members and take part in group or 1-to-1 therapy with therapists.

- <https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

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)

Switchboard

LGBT+ helpline; calls cost the same as those to 01 and 02 numbers; available 10am-10pm every day

- 0300 330 0630

Muslim Youth Helpline

Faith and culturally sensitive support service for Muslim communities; free to call; available 4pm-10pm every day

- 0808 808 2008

Campaign Against Living Miserably

For anyone who needs to talk about life's problems; free to call; available 5pm-midnight every day

- 0800 58 58 58

Websites

stem4 — www.stem4.org.uk

Mind — www.mind.org.uk

Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline — www.switchboard.lgbt

The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network — www.baatn.org.uk

Muslim Youth Helpline — www.myh.org.uk

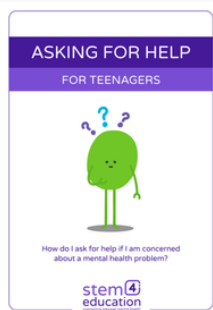
Anxiety UK — www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Bipolar UK — www.bipolaruk.org

Harmless — www.harmless.org.uk

Young Minds — www.youngminds.org.uk

Additional resources



Asking for Help Booklet

Ever wondered how to ask for help if concerned about a mental health problem? This guide provides a simple guide on how to take the first steps to talk to friends, trusted adults, and your GP.

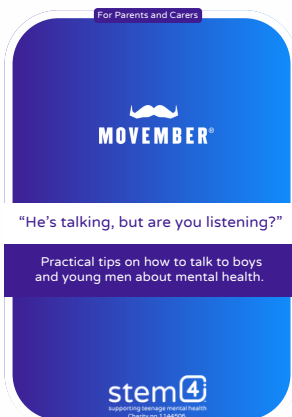
Found at <https://stem4.org.uk/askingforhelp/>



Power building tips for boys and young men

A guide containing ideas of things you can do to add to your self-esteem power kit to help build positive self-esteem.

Found at <https://stem4.org.uk/movember/>



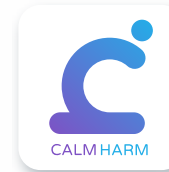
Practical tips on how to talk to boys and young men about mental health.

Parents, carers and Educators are in a strong position to make a positive difference to the wellbeing of boys and young men in terms of being able to provide the first line of support, start a conversation and seek effective intervention.

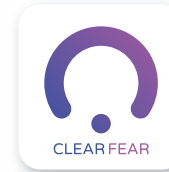
We hope that these practical tips will help you to feel prepared and confident to take that first step.

Found at <https://stem4.org.uk/movember/>

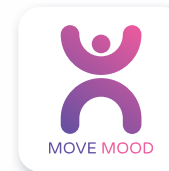
stem4 Apps



Calm Harm A free app to help teenagers resist or manage the urge to self-harm.
www.calmharm.co.uk | [@calmharmapp](https://twitter.com/calmharmapp)



Clear Fear A free app to help children and young people manage the symptoms of anxiety.
www.clearfear.co.uk | [@clearfearapp](https://twitter.com/clearfearapp)



Move Mood A free app to help teenagers manage low mood and depression.
www.movemood.co.uk | [@appmovemood](https://twitter.com/appmovemood)



Combined Minds A free app to help families and friends provide mental health support.
www.combinedminds.co.uk | [@combmindsapp](https://twitter.com/combmindsapp)



Worth Warrior A free app to help young people manage negative body image, poor self-worth, and related early-stage eating difficulties or disorders.
www.worthwarrior.co.uk | [@worthwarriorapp](https://twitter.com/worthwarriorapp)

Please note these apps are free in the UK.



Please note that none of the stem4 apps substitute for seeing a mental health professional/GP, see a suitably qualified professional for assessment and advice on treatment.

stem4, 51 St George's Rd, Wimbledon, SW19 4EA

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www.stem4.org.uk • enquiries@stem4.org.uk



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