


Asking for help



For teenagers

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

WELCOME

Welcome to 'Asking for Help': a handy guide which signposts you to support and provides tips on ways to develop positive mental health.

In 2018, an NHS Digital Survey revealed 1 in 8 children and young people aged between 5-19 present with at least one diagnosable mental health condition. Since mental health and ill health lie on a spectrum, it is important to be able to identify early signs of negative change and take effective steps to get back on track.

This booklet contains information on the early signs of commonly occurring mental health issues and highlights a directory of resources. It also provides you with ideas on how to build resourcefulness and adapt to the adverse challenges you might face in life. As the saying goes, 'you can't change the direction of the wind but you can learn to change the direction of your sails,' so learning ways to be resilient to challenge is important for everyone.



Dr Nihara Krause
Consultant Clinical Psychologist
CEO and Founder of stem4

stem4 is a charity based in Merton that promotes positive mental health in teenagers. It aims to raise early awareness and highlights the importance of early intervention in teenage mental health issues.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
WANT TO BUILD RESILIENCE?	4/5
DR. KRAUSE'S MINDYOUR5	6
FEELING ANXIOUS?	7
WORRIED ABOUT LOW MOOD?	8
WORRIED ABOUT YOUR EATING?	9
WORRIED ABOUT SELF-HARM?	10
stem4 Apps	11
ASKING FOR HELP - FOR YOU	12
TELLING A PARENT	13
TALKING TO A TEACHER	14
SEEING YOUR GP	15
FRIENDS WATCH	16/17
USEFUL CONTACTS	18/19



WANT TO BUILD RESILIENCE?

RESILIENCE - THE POSITIVE WAY IN WHICH WE ADAPT TO THE ADVERSE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN LIFE.

Resilience is more than just 'bouncing back' when you are knocked down. It is the ability to adapt to hardship and the process of building up tools to deal with the challenges you face in life.

Resilience building is not just down to the individual. You can use your ties to families, relationships, schools and communities to help grow your resilience.

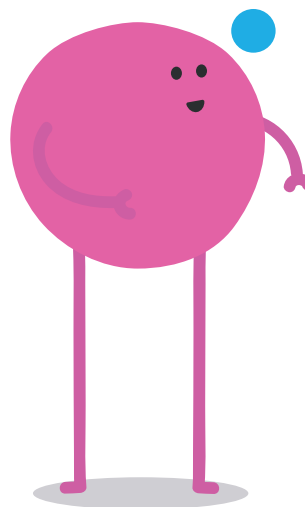
Try to have a positive, 'give things a go' attitude and be prepared to change your direction of thinking if needed.

Work on your ability to understand, regulate and express your emotions.



BOUNCE NOT
BREAK

TOP TIPS



Sometimes you may also need to build a resilience to distractions and temptations. It is important to be able to say no to things that will damage your mental health. For example, practising digital resilience and monitoring your screen time can be helpful in managing excess or damaging behaviour.


Some of the challenges you face might be quite specific. For example, many young people find school and the many elements they have to face – friendships, learning, exams, homework, stressful. Being resilient will help you to handle these.


Try and view setbacks as an opportunity to grow, and failure as an opportunity to learn.


Focus on developing your 'Grit,' which is described as 'perseverance and passion for long term goals.'

DR KRAUSE'S MINDYOUR5


Most of us know a number of ways in which we can look after our body to keep healthy. Looking after our brains is just as important. However, knowing how to do this can feel a little more challenging. Try and practise one element from each category below every day to support good 'mind health'.


 **Healthy Practice** - This reminds you to look after your body in order to look after your brain. For example, it helps to practise a regular sleep routine or to eat a balanced diet.

 **Activity** - Activities are very helpful for brain health. These include most sports and physical activities, creative activities (e.g. art), calming/soothing activities (e.g. mindfulness/having a massage), exciting activities (e.g. a new game).

 **Positive Thinking** - How we think will influence our emotions and our actions. Some thoughts are positive and uplifting and others are negative. Negative thoughts can make us feel unhappy or anxious. *Flexible thinking* helps us to problem solve.

Learning to manage our thoughts and get a good balance between negative and positive is very helpful.

 **Positive Emotions** - Knowing what you feel and being able to express and manage emotions is very helpful. For example, when you watch a movie, observe what emotions this brings about in you. Talk with someone else who has also watched it and share what you experienced. See what you have in common and how you differ.

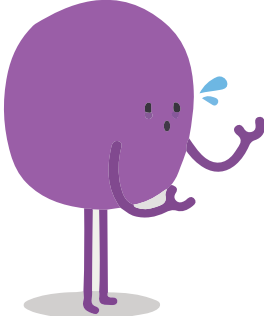
 **Your Connections** - Friends, family and relationships are really important to help us feel happy. Leaving some time every day to spend a little face to face time with some, or all of them can be very good for positive mental health.

For more information and tips on how to MINDYOUR5, go to stem4.org.uk

FEELING ANXIOUS?

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. Whilst a certain amount of anxiety can make us feel more alert and improves our performance, too much anxiety that stays at high levels for a long time can be unhelpful.

SOME WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE:



- Panic & feeling under pressure
- Disturbed sleep
- Inability to relax or agitation
- Worrying most of the time
- Overeating or reduced appetite
- Irrational & continuous fear

TOP TIPS...

- 1 Keep a record of worrying thoughts that might lead to anxious behaviours – chat to someone who can help you get a different view.
- 2 Face things you're fearful of rather than putting them off – reward yourself for every achievement.
- 3 Take breaks, relax your muscles as best you can, focus on feeling calm.
- 4 Rank your worries, put away the minor ones and create an action plan to solve your biggest one – why not ask someone to help you?
- 5 Try the stem4 Clear Fear app, it's free to download and provides techniques to manage anxiety.
- 6 Talk to someone who can help – parent, sibling, friend, teacher, GP.

WORRIED ABOUT LOW MOOD?

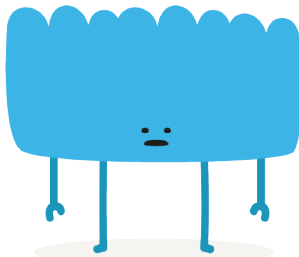
All of us can feel sad or low from time to time, these feelings are normal. You might just need some time to sort out what's upsetting you. However, sometimes these feelings continue and can turn into clinical depression.

SOME WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE:

Feeling sad over long periods of time

Changes in sleep & appetite

Getting very irritable & angry



Not enjoying things you used to

Withdrawing from things you love

Hurting yourself in different ways

TOP TIPS...

1 Keep a record of negative thoughts and get someone else's objective perspective on them.

2 Even though it's hard, do some exercise – it does help.

3 Read/watch/see friends/do things that are comforting and uplifting.

4 Check out online resources – try the stem4 Move Mood app to help with depression.

5 Keep an open mind – even though things can look bleak, change is always possible.

6 Talk to someone who can help – parent, sibling, friend, teacher, GP.

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR EATING?

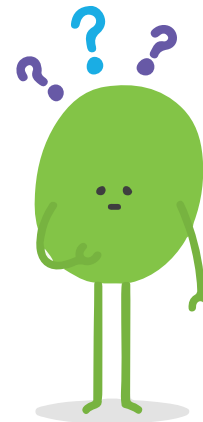
Many of us enjoy food and eating but some people may have a difficult relationship with food and its effects on their body. This may lead to an eating disorder. Eating disorders need specialist assessment and help – the earlier the better.

SOME WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE:

Avoiding social situations where eating might prove difficult

Weight changes that are of medical concern. Impact on sleep, mood, physical health, confidence, relationships, amongst many others.

Losing a considerable amount of weight by not eating or gaining weight rapidly by over eating



TOP TIPS...

1 Tell someone responsible who can direct you to suitable help to make sure you are physically and emotionally well.

2 Keep a diary of what you eat. Aim to eat regularly – 3 meals a day with a snack in between.

3 Work on improving your self-esteem – this takes time, start by listening to positive things people say about you.

4 Exercise only in moderation after your health has been checked out by a doctor. Eating disorders can affect your heart.

WORRIED ABOUT SELF-HARM?

Self-harm is a behaviour that is often associated with mental ill health and difficult to express emotions. Take steps to manage self-harm as early as possible in order to get back on track.

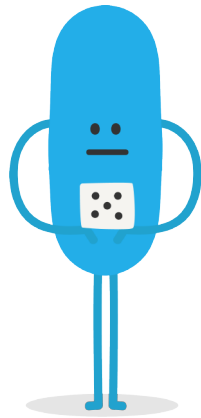
SOME WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE:

Using self-harm to deal with difficult emotions

Finding it difficult to stop thinking about it

Moving away from friends and family in case they find out

Feeling emotions such as sad, numb, anxious, angry more than usual



TOP TIPS...

1

Speak to a responsible adult or ask your GP for help – it's the first step to making a commitment to change.

3

Download the stem4 Calm Harm app, it's free and provides a range of techniques to help manage self-harm behaviour.

2

Make access to self-harming difficult – put reminders away.

4

Persevere – with time and practice self-harm can be managed.

stem4 Apps



Clear Fear is a free app to help young people manage the symptoms of anxiety. Clear Fear uses a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) framework to help change anxious thoughts and emotions, alter anxious behaviours and calm fear responses.



Calm Harm is a free app to help teenagers manage or resist the urge to self-harm. Calm Harm is based on an evidence-based approach called Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) which is a form of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and aims to support young people, either as part of on-going treatment or as an interim measure whilst they wait for specialist help.



Combined Minds is a free app to help families and friends provide mental health support. The app uses a 'Strengths-Based' Approach which has been shown to be effective in recovery and focuses on the positive attributes of the person and builds on resourcefulness and resilience.



Move Mood is a free app to help teenagers manage symptoms of depression. The app uses principles of Behavioural Activation Therapy to help you improve your mood by encouraging you to increase your motivation to carry out a variety of tasks in order to help you to move forward, take control and feel positive.

Download today



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.

ASKING FOR HELP

FOR YOU

- 1 The first step is to accept that it's OK to need help.
- 2 Before you speak to someone try and figure out what you need help with. It might be easier to write it down.
- 3 Remember, you don't have to know the reasons why you are feeling the way you are. You just need to be able to put into words or write down what you want help with.
- 4 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.

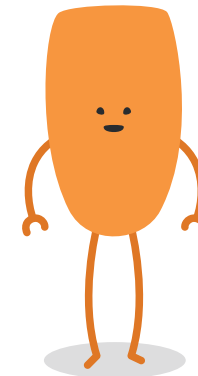
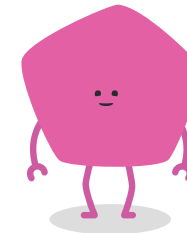
TALKING TO FRIENDS

- 1 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.
- 2 Find a good time and place to talk and make sure your friend hasn't got to rush anywhere.
- 3 Before the talk, decide on what information you want to share.
- 4 You might even want to practise what you would like to tell them.
- 5 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?
- 6 Be prepared to answer their questions and also let them know when you are not comfortable to answer.
- 7 Friends are not trained in responding accurately so be prepared for a variety of responses.
- 8 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 are afraid to talk to their parents about a mental health problem. Here are some top tips.

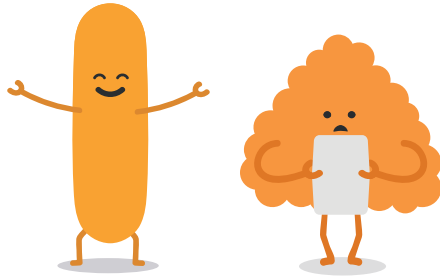
- 1 You may not want to upset them or imagine they might be angry, disappointed, sad or dismissive. Most teenagers feel their parents just won't understand.
- 2 Try to plan what you are going to say to them first.
- 3 You don't have to give them details if you don't want to. Start by telling them the symptoms you feel and how they have been impacting on you.
- 4 Point them to the stem4 website (www.stem4.org.uk) if they need more information.



- 5 Choose a time when they are not rushed and tell them from the start that you would like to tell them everything without interruption.
- 6 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.
- 7 You can also talk to someone at your school, or your GP, and ask them to help you tell your parents.
- 8 If talking in person is hard, you can also write to them.

TALKING TO A TEACHER

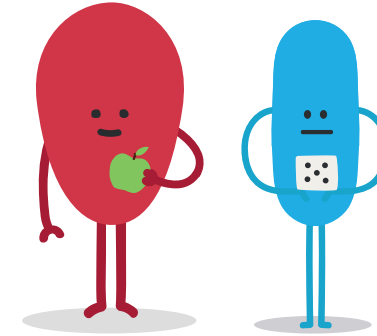
Talking about mental health is not easy, so it's important that you choose a teacher you can trust or talk to. The teacher you choose to confide in might be your form tutor, head of year, head of pastoral care, designated safeguarding lead or mental health lead.



- 1 Prepare what you would like to say and what you would like from them once they know.
- 2 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?"
- 3 You can ask at the beginning of the conversation 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 Remember, teachers aren't trained mental health professionals. If you're looking for professional support, try talking to your GP who will be able to help.
- 6 Your school may have a counselling service which you can ask your teacher to help you to access.

SEEING YOUR GP

You can see 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.



- 1 You can call your doctor's surgery and speak to a receptionist to book an appointment. 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.
- 2 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 this online using the website for your surgery.
- 3 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.
- 4 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, 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.
- 5 Before you see the doctor prepare what you would like to say. Check www.DocReady.org for help with preparation and watch the short video called 'Find the Words' on <https://www.mind.org.uk/youandyourgp>

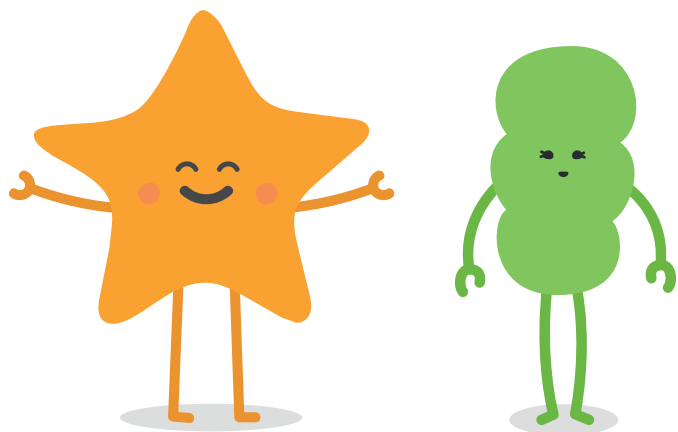
FRIENDS WATCH

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 the 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 - 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 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.



USEFUL CONTACTS

Anxiety UK

Provide support and help if you've been diagnosed with, or suspect you may have, an anxiety condition.

Text service: 07537 416905

Infoline: 03444 775774

Web: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Beat

The UK's eating disorder charity.

Youthline: 0808 801 0711

Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Web: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Calm Harm App

The Calm Harm app provides ways for children and young people to manage the urge to self harm. Developed for stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist together with input from young people. Free to download.

Web: www.calmharm.co.uk

Childline

Counselling service for children and young people in the UK. Phone, talk to a counsellor online, send Childline an email or post on the message boards.

Helpline: 0800 1111 (Everyday, 24 hours)

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Clear Fear App

The Clear Fear app provides ways for children and young people to manage anxiety. Developed for stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist together with input from young people. Free to download.

Web: www.clearfear.co.uk

Combined Minds App

Combined Minds is a free app developed for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, to help families and friends support young people with their mental health.

Web: www.combinedminds.co.uk

Eating Disorders Support

Provide support to anyone affected by eating disorders, including carers.

Helpline: 01494 793223

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

Web: www.eatingdisorderssupport.co.uk

Frank

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

Helpline: 0300 123 6600

Web: www.talktofrank.com

Mind

Provide information on mental health problems and where to get help.

Infoline: 0300 123 3393 **Text:** 86463

Mon – Fri 9 am – 6 pm

Web: www.mind.org.uk

No Panic

Provide a youth helpline and services to sufferers and carers of people with Panic, Anxiety, Phobias and Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD).

Youth Helpline: 0330 606 1174 (for 13- to 20-year olds)

Web: www.nopanic.org.uk

NSPCC

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

Helpline for adults: 0808 800 5000

Childline (for 18 years old and under): 0800 1111

Web: www.nspcc.org.uk

OCD Action

Offer support and information to anybody affected by OCD

Helpline: 0845 390 6232

Mon – Fri 9.30 am – 5 pm

Web: www.ocdaction.org.uk

Papyrus prevention of young suicide

Provides confidential suicide prevention advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person.

Helpline: 0800 068 4141

Relate

Relationship support and counselling for children and young people.

Web: www.relate.org.uk

Samaritans

Provide confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Helpline: 116 123 (Everyday, 24 hours)

Web: www.samaritans.org

SANE

Offer specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.

Helpline: 0300 304 7000

Everyday 4.30 pm – 10.30 pm

Web: www.sane.org.uk

SEED

Eating disorder support service

Helpline: 01482 718130

(Mon- Fri 9.30 am – 2.30 pm)

Web: www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk

SHOUT

Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere.

Text: 85258

Web: www.giveusashout.org

Stonewall

Information and advice for LGBT communities and their allies.

Helpline: 0800 0502020

Web: www.stonewall.org.uk

The Mix

Information and support for under 25's, on-line chat with a trained helpline supporter.

Helpline: 0808 808 4994

Everyday 11 am – 11 pm

Web: www.themix.org.uk

YoungMinds

Information for both parents and young people on child and adolescent mental health.

Parents' Helpline: 0808 802 5544

(Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)

Web: www.youngminds.org.uk

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