

Getting Answers to Your Mental Health Questions: How to Talk with Parents and Other Trusted Adults

Some teens feel nervous talking with their parents or other adults about mental health. They might be worried about what others will think or wonder if they'll be taken seriously. But mental health is no different from physical health, and it's important to be able to talk about it. The first place most teens turn is to a trusted adult, whether it's a parent or someone else you trust.

What do I want to know?

It's normal to have questions or concerns about mental health. Make a list of your questions to help you organize your thoughts. Here are some questions other teens had. What are YOURS?



I feel judged at school because of my race. How can I deal with this?

There are so many problems in the world right now. Sometimes I feel hopeless. What can I do?

When I try to break up with my boy/girlfriend, they say they're going to kill themselves. What do I do?

I'm often not able to sleep because I have nightmares about a past experience.

How do I tell somebody that my friend is struggling with depression without breaking my friend's trust?

Should I go to therapy?

List three things you want to ask a trusted adult about mental health:

- _____
- _____
- _____

How do I find an adult to speak with?

It's important to rely on your parents or guardians when you are having an issue or experiencing mental health challenges. Sometimes parents or guardians might not be available at the time you need help. In these cases, other trusted adults can also provide support. Identify some trusted adults in your community who you could reach out to for help.

A trusted adult could be:

- A favorite teacher
- The school nurse or guidance counselor
- The coach of your sports team
- A reliable family member or family friend
- A leader of an after-school club or youth group
- A faith leader



Your wellbeing and security are critical. Follow these tips to be sure you are safe:

- Choose a trusted adult you and your guardian know very well.
- Learn more about this person's reputation at school or in the community. Has this person ever made you or anyone else feel uncomfortable?
- Be sure you are in a safe public space when having conversations with a trusted adult. This could be on school grounds, a coffee shop, or a community center.

How do I start a conversation with my parent or another trusted adult about my mental health?

It can sometimes be hard to open up to your parents or another adult. You might worry that they won't take you seriously or that they'll be disappointed. Remember your mental health is important and sharing with an adult is a big step toward feeling better. Here are some tips to make these conversations less intimidating.

Before your talk

- Schedule a time and place for the conversation.
 - Pick an environment where you feel comfortable.
 - Choose a time when neither of you feel rushed or are distracted by other things.
 - Avoid having the conversation at a time you feel very agitated or upset.
 - Talk while you are doing something together, like going for a walk or having a meal.
- Plan what you want to say.
 - Write a script to make sure you don't forget something you want to say.
 - Find information online to share with your parent or trusted adult.
- Practice your conversation.
 - Rehearse what you want to say by yourself or with a friend if you're comfortable.
 - Remember the conversation might not go as planned and that's okay! It's good that you are starting the conversation.

During your talk

- Ask about their experience with mental health – they might relate with you more than you think.
- Tell them if you are looking for advice, someone to listen, help finding a therapist, or something else.
 - Describe the issue:
"Mom, it's been very hard to keep my grades up in school because I've been feeling so hopeless all the time. That's why I want to talk to someone and get some extra support."
 - Clearly say what you need, even if it's difficult to open up:
"I know you want me to trust you. But I need you to trust that I know what I need right now. I need a therapist."
- Share what you're comfortable with – you don't have to answer every question you're asked.
- Some ideas for what to say:
 - For the past [amount of time], I have been feeling _____.
 - I have struggled with _____ [specific behaviors/thoughts/physical changes].
 - Telling you this makes me feel _____, but I'm telling you this because _____.
 - I would like to _____ [talk to a doctor/counselor, find a support group].

After your talk

- Sometimes it takes more than one conversation!
- Follow up with your trusted adult to be sure you get help.
- Here are some [resources](#) you may also find helpful.

Confidentiality

You can speak with your trusted adult about what they are able to keep confidential before you talk with them. You should be aware that some trusted adults may be required by law to contact child protective services or another authority if you reveal that you or someone is in danger. Laws about confidentiality are different in each state.

