

# MENTAL HEALTH AND GETTING HELP

Many young people who really need help for mental health issues like depression, anxiety, or disordered eating don't get it. This is a problem because these mental health issues are very treatable, and with counselling, medication or a combination of both, many teens go on to lead happy and healthy lives.

## Some of the reasons that teens may not seek help include:

- › They feel that there is no chance of solving their problems
- › They believe they have to deal with what they are feeling alone
- › They think that what they are feeling is part of growing up
- › They're afraid that seeking help means they are "crazy"

## These things aren't true – they are the result of stigma and misunderstanding about mental health.

- › Mental health issues aren't just a part of growing up – you should never have to feel this bad.
- › Mental health issues are very treatable
- › Mental health issues are not something you can easily get over without the support of family, friends, and professionals
- › "Crazy" is a word that stigma uses to discriminate against people and make people who are struggling feel bad or guilty about it.

## Other reasons that young people might not seek help include:

- › They're afraid they won't be listened to, or have gotten a bad reaction when they tried to open up in the past.
- › They don't like the idea of treatment, or they've had a bad experience with mental health services in the past.

## Mental health services

If you have had bad experiences with mental health services in the past, it's normal that you'd be reluctant to go down that road again. It would be better if all help was equally helpful, but the reality is that many people have to try a few different services or counsellors before they find one that really works for them. Don't let a bad experience be the thing that keeps you from finding help that works for you. If you're not sure what's available to you, call us and we can help you to locate mental health services in your area.



No-cost mental health or counselling services (particularly those not covered under your provincial healthcare plan) often have long wait lists. This can be really difficult and frustrating, especially if it's taken you a while to reach out for help. Consider asking whether the service provider has any drop-in times or groups that you could take part in until a counsellor becomes available. You can also call us or use some of the tools on our website while you wait.

If things are so bad right now that you are thinking about hurting yourself or suicide, call Kids Help Phone (1 800 668-6868) or 911.



## Talking to someone you know

If you're worried about what people might think or do if you tell them that you're struggling, it might be helpful to consider speaking to someone who is trustworthy, but who has a bit more distance from your life than a friend or parent. Aunts, uncles, guidance counsellors, and teachers can be good candidates. Or, if you want to be absolutely assured that what you say will be kept confidential, you can call a Kids Help Phone counsellor at 1-800-668-6868. We don't ask for names or track phone numbers, so your story is safe with us.

### Talking to your parent(s)

If you are thinking of telling your parent(s) about something you are struggling with but are afraid of how they will react, here are some tips about talking about tough stuff with parents:

- › Rehearsing can be helpful. Plan out the points you want to make, and the words you'd like to use.
- › Pick a good time. Approaching your parent(s) when they are busy, or stressed, or when they have just walked through the door may not be a great idea. Find a time when they are relaxed and approachable. You may even want to set up an appointment or make a 'date' to talk to them.
- › Let them know what you expect of them while you talk. For example "I have some things to say, and I'd really appreciate it if you wait until I'm finished to respond ... would that be okay?"
- › Try not to get angry. Yelling or becoming defensive does not help you to get your message across.
- › It would be great if your parent(s) could be as calm and supportive as you'd like them to be, but know that they might react emotionally at first. Don't be too discouraged if you don't get the exact response you were hoping for. Your parent(s) might need some time to collect themselves before they can respond in a helpful way.
- › Recognize if the conversation stops being productive (i.e. if you are going over the same points again and again, or getting nothing but silence) and consider ending it for the time being. You can always try again later, after you've all had some time to think.

If you've tried talking to your parents, and you just aren't getting the support you need from them, it might be time to turn to someone else. It feels terrible to be misunderstood or dismissed by your parents, but don't let it be the end of your efforts to find support. Reach out to another trusted adult, or call us.

### Just not ready to reach out yet?

If you just don't feel ready to talk to anyone about what you are going through, here are some other things you can do:

- › Educate yourself
  - Read about mental health and the types of treatments that are out there.
  - Visit the Info Booth section of our website. ([www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca))
- › Take care of yourself
  - Play sports or do another activity you love
  - Write about your feelings in a journal
  - Go for a walk
  - Get a good night's sleep
  - Hang out with friends
- › What about writing to a counsellor?
  - Sometimes it's easier to write it out than to talk. Would you consider asking a question or writing about what you are feeling in the "ask a counsellor" section of our website?

Since 1989 Kids Help Phone has helped millions of troubled and abused children and youth by providing compassionate and professional counselling, trustworthy information and local community referrals through its phone and web-based service.

A national charity, Kids Help Phone receives no core government or United Way funding. Instead, it relies on the support of community-based volunteers and individual and corporate donors to ensure that its counsellors are there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, whenever a child needs help. Visit [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca) to donate.

1 800 668 6868  
KidsHelpPhone.ca

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