



## Helping your teenager ask for help

Many teenagers believe they should be able to sort out their problems on their own. However, they are often too embarrassed to talk to friends and family, and can also be worried about the confidentiality of information they give to a professional.

**So what can you do as a parent?** Firstly, keep talking to your children and let them know that no matter what the problem is you will listen without judgement and help them to work out ways to cope or solve the problem. Now this sounds easy but teenagers, even when they know this, will probably choose to talk to their friends and not you so here are some tips.

- **Make sure you know your teenager's friends and their parents.** Not so you can delve and discover, but so they know you are approachable and if they feel the problem needs your involvement, they can talk to you openly and honestly.
- **Listen non-judgementally.** Now is not the time to give your judgement on a situation that your teenager has decided to share with you. Try to get as much information as you can to help both of you talk about the issue – but don't try too hard or you might push them away.
- **Let your child know that it is okay to need help** and that accepting help is a positive life skill. Give your child an example of when you benefitted from seeking advice or help.
- **Tell them you are concerned about them.** Knowing that you care and are willing to listen will keep the lines of communication open and encourage your teenager to talk to you when they have a problem.
- **Ask if they have thought about getting help.** If your child has resisted getting help, ask them why.
- **Brainstorm the different people they could go to for help.**
- **Offer your child the opportunity to talk with a professional** such as a counsellor or psychologist outside of school hours. Sometimes students are reluctant to be seen talking to the school counsellor in case they are thought of as different or their private business is shared. Have a list of support services available in your area. You may need to gently prompt them a few times before they are ready to take this step in getting help. Offer to go with them to their appointments and explain what will happen with the counsellor or health professional.
- **It's important to let your child's school know that your child is working through a difficult time** so that they can provide support and encouragement, and also understand why there have been changes in your child's behaviour, attendance or school work. Check to see if your teenager is okay with you letting the school know there is a problem. If you are worried about sharing information with your child's school, ask the school how the information will be used and who it will be shared with.

### Where else can you go for advice?



[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)  
Reachout is about helping young people to help themselves

[www.ybblue.com.au/](http://www.ybblue.com.au/)  
Beyondblue is a national depression initiative for young people

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)  
Kids Helpline is a 24 hour helpline that can be called on 1800 55 1800

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
Headspace and Yarn Space

[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)  
Blackdog Institute

Lifeline 131 114

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

**Encouraging your children to seek help will give them emotional support to develop coping skills and build resilience.**

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