

Wednesday May 18, 2022

One of the most powerful tools we have to support mental health and wellness is our ability to communicate feelings and needs with others. Knowing when, and how to reach out for support is an essential skill for students both at home and in the school environment. Learning to communicate effectively to meet an emotional or academic need can be encouraged at school. Modelling and practicing these skills with your students can help to reduce the stigma that is associated with asking for help. Below are some activities from [School Mental Health Ontario](#) that you can try this week in your classroom.



Try the [Ask Three Then Me](#) activity in your class to help students understand the importance of asking questions and asking for help.

Try the [Finding Solutions](#) activity in your class to provide students with ways to find win/win solutions when conflicts arise

Try the [Who Can You Count On](#) activity in your class to encourage support seeking, which is an important skill for personal resiliency

Parents and caregivers are key to supporting positive mental health in children and youth. Sometimes it can be difficult for a young person to reach out to the important adults in their lives for help.

You can review these tips and sample phrases from [Kids Help Phone](#) with your students to help make talking to a parent or caregiver about what's on their mind less anxiety provoking.



**Kids Help Phone**

**How can I talk to a parent/caregiver about something?**



Having a difficult conversation can be nerve-racking. You may be afraid or anxious to share what's on your mind, especially if you're talking to someone who's important to you.

If you have a parent/caregiver in your life, who you'd like to share something with, there are things you can try to make talking about it a little easier...

**1 Set goals and expectations**

Take time to think about what you hope to get out of the conversation. What do you need right now? What do you think may happen?

You can write down some realistic goals for your chat to help guide the discussion. Some common goals are to share feelings, talk about something going on, brainstorm ideas, etc.



**2 Practise**

It can be hard to say (and remember!) everything when you need to share it with someone.

Consider writing down the most important things you'd like to talk about and ways you can say them to your parent/caregiver. You could prioritize your list, and have your notes with you during your chat.



**3 Set a Time**

Ask your parent/caregiver if you can take some time to chat. You can ask in the way that feels right for you (e.g. with a text, email, etc.).

Try to choose a time and space that's quiet/calm, free of distractions and private.



**4 Start gently**

When it's time to talk, you can begin by thanking your parent/caregiver for having the conversation with you. You can also let them know how you're feeling in the moment.



**5 Open up**

You can let your parent/caregiver know when you're ready to share what's going on for you. Try to take deep breathes as you go to help calm your nerves if you need to.

**6 Share what's on your mind**

Using your notes as needed, you can talk to your parent/caregiver about what's been happening. Pace yourself, and start with the most important stuff first.



**7 Check in with yourself**

When we experience tough situations or feelings, it can be hard to think clearly. Check in with yourself about how you're doing as the conversation progresses. It's OK if you do or don't show your emotions.

If things get too intense, heated or aren't going according to plan, you can take a break and come back later. And if you start to feel like your parent/caregiver isn't the right person to have this conversation with, or that this isn't the best time, you can ask to take a pause and consider if there's someone else who may be better able to help. You can also bring in another person (e.g. a Kids Help Phone counsellor, therapist, community leader, etc.) if you're feeling stuck.



**8 Share your goals**

During your chat, you can share your conversation goals with your parent/caregiver, including if you need their support. This can make things more clear to you and them about what you're hoping to get out of the discussion.

Your parent/caregiver may help you figure out some options. And don't forget, you can write down what's said so you can reflect on it later. You can also try repeating back what they say to confirm your understanding, and encourage them to do the same.



**9 Take next steps**

You can work through what you each need to do to address the issue/your goals and get support as needed. These next steps can happen right away, or when you've had a chance to think them through.

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