A little preparation for an appointment

You do not need a perfect explanation to ask for help. Choose one prompt, leave the rest, or show these words to a qualified professional.

An opening you could use

"I have been finding things difficult. I may need a moment to explain. Could we start with what is affecting me most?"

One concern I want to mention

What has changed, when did it begin, and how is everyday life affected? A few words or one example is enough. [S1]

One question I want answered

For example: "What are my options, and what might the next step involve?" You can ask about costs, waiting times and lower-cost local support.

What would help me communicate?

You might ask for more time, an interpreter, a quieter setting, written information or a trusted companion. Ask what is available. You can request time alone and ask about confidentiality and its limits. [S1]

Before we finish

"Could we write down the plan, when to review it, and whom I should contact if things get worse?"

My next question or agreed next step:

Optional private notes only. A shared device or printer may expose them. Nothing needs to be completed or submitted before you seek help. Sources and urgent-support guidance: page 5.

Starting a conversation, at your pace

Wanting connection and feeling anxious can happen together. These are words to adapt, not lines to perform. One small, welcome exchange can be enough for today.

1. Choose a manageable beginning

In a setting where conversation is welcome: "Hello, how are you finding the event?" A greeting may be enough. Let the other person choose whether to engage. [S2]

2. Follow what they actually say

"You mentioned a new project. What do you enjoy about it?" One ordinary question can give the conversation somewhere to go. You do not need to fill every silence. [S2, S3]

3. Give yourself a moment

"Give me a moment to think." Or: "Would it be all right to talk somewhere quieter?" Keep the communication and access supports you need.

4. Clarify or repair

"I may have misunderstood. Did you mean...?" Or: "That came out differently from what I intended. May I try again?" A conversation can include a correction.

5. Finish kindly

"It was good to talk. I am going to head off now." Either person may pause or leave. A short exchange does not have to become a friendship or date.

Choose steps that fit your circumstances. Eye contact, touch, speech and disclosure are not requirements. If a situation is unsafe, the useful next step may be leaving or seeking support.

Dating, messages and the thoughts afterwards

You do not have to become fearless to consider a small step you want. Your comfort and the other person's freedom to choose both matter.

An invitation with room for an answer

"I have enjoyed talking. Would you like to meet again?" Keep the invitation clear. If the answer is no, you can say: "Thank you for letting me know." You do not need to persuade them.

A pace that feels right for you

"I would like to get to know you slowly." Or: "I would prefer to meet in a public place." Keep genuine safety arrangements, such as your own way home. These are not obstacles to overcome.

When a reply has not arrived

You may not know what the delay means. You can acknowledge the worry without deciding that your feared explanation is a fact. If useful, return to an ordinary activity for a while. This is an option, not a rule about how long anyone must wait.

When you replay the conversation

Try one brief, kind question: "What did I actually hear, and what am I guessing?" Then choose what needs attention now. You do not need a verdict on your worth or repeated checking until you feel certain. [S2]

Respect the ending

A clear refusal or request for space should be respected. No response is not agreement. You may also decide not to continue, without providing personal details.

These original examples are not tested dating techniques or a treatment programme. Adapt them to culture, disability, communication preferences and safety. You do not need a romantic relationship to deserve connection.

When you or someone else needs support

We all need other people at times. Support can begin with ordinary kindness, while leaving room for privacy, limits and professional care.

Ask for the kind of support you want

To a trusted person: "I have been overthinking a conversation. Could you listen for a few minutes? I do not need you to work out what the other person thinks." You choose how much to share.

When someone opens up

"Thank you for telling me. Would listening, some company or help with a practical next step be useful?" Listen without pressing for details or trying to make them feel positive. [S3]

Care can include a limit

"I care about you. I can talk for a little while, and I may not know all the answers." Do not promise constant availability. You can help someone look for appropriate support with their agreement. [S3]

Ask a qualified professional

If anxiety persists, becomes overwhelming or limits everyday life, a local primary care clinician or qualified mental health professional can help assess what is happening and discuss options. [S2, S5]

Words for that conversation

"Fear before and after social situations is taking up a lot of my day. Could we discuss support or treatment?" You can use the appointment prompts on page 1. [S1, S2]

If someone is unsafe or abusive, you do not have to disclose more, reconcile or practise approaching them. Choose a safer person or specialist support. Supportive conversation does not replace indicated treatment or emergency care.

Support, sources and using these pages

By Dr Jonathan Haverkampf. Adult educational prompts. Sources checked and content approved 21 October 2026.

If help cannot wait

For immediate danger or inability to stay safe, contact local emergency services now. For urgent mental health needs, seek your local urgent clinical or crisis service. Do not wait for a routine appointment or a website reply.

Choose a useful format

Read the matching webpage with your own zoom or reading tools. The PDFs are printable copies in A4 and US Letter, with selectable text. For a screen reader, use the webpage. WHO's official stress guide offers several language and audio options. [S4]

Limits and local fit

These original prompts draw on the sources below. They are educational options, not a diagnostic questionnaire, validated intervention or complete treatment. No particular suggestion suits everyone. Professional services, costs and confidentiality rules vary by place.

[S1] NIMH: Talking with a health care provider

[S2] NHS: Social anxiety

[S3] NHS: Helping others with mental health problems

[S4] WHO: Doing What Matters in Times of Stress

[S5] NIMH: Social anxiety disorder

Web version, source notes and worldwide support

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