Finding the words to ask for help

Start with a few words; you do not need a complete explanation



You can ask for support before you know what is wrong. Use any of these prompts, skip anything you wish, or show this sheet to the person you are speaking with. It is not homework you must finish. [1, 2]
This sheet includes words you can borrow, because talking with someone you trust, or with a professional, can make difficult things feel more manageable.

To someone you trust

I've been finding things hard. Could we have a short chat? I'd appreciate someone listening while I work out what to say.

To a GP, family doctor or another professional

Something has changed in how I'm feeling or coping, and it's affecting my day. I'd like help understanding it and deciding what support I need.

What feels most important to say today?

A few words or one example is enough.

When did it start, and what has changed?

Include whether it comes and goes or is getting harder.

How is everyday life affected?

For example: sleep, eating, work, relationships or looking after yourself.

What would help me in this conversation?

Listening, practical help, an assessment, more time or communication support.

Keep completed notes private. Choose a safe person and contact method; messages may be visible to someone with access to your device. If you feel unsafe now, seek help now rather than finishing the sheet.

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Make the next step clearer

Bring what you can; you can explain the rest together

Before an appointment

Bring your notes and a medicines list, including supplements. Mention alcohol or other drugs, health changes and previous support. Ask about communication support or bringing someone you trust, and how confidentiality works, including its safety limits. [2, 3]

Help the professional see the whole picture

Mention physical symptoms and any periods of unusually high energy, little need for sleep or behaviour that is very different from usual. These details may affect the assessment; they do not establish a diagnosis. Medication options or changes need to be discussed with a qualified prescriber. [2, 4]

Questions you could take with you

What might explain this, including physical causes? What are my options, including public or low-cost support? When will we review the plan? Whom should I contact if things worsen? Ask for the next steps in writing. [2, 3]

My next contact or agreed next step

If the first conversation does not help

Someone may be unavailable or unsure how to respond. Your needs still matter. Try another safe person, a GP or a support service. You do not need to keep explaining to someone who treats you badly. [1]

Some things should not wait for a routine appointment

Say directly if you are thinking about suicide or self-harm, feel at risk, or are struggling to care for yourself. Contact a GP, an out-of-hours doctor or your mental health team urgently. For immediate danger or inability to stay safe, call emergency services. For free listening support, day or night: in Ireland, Samaritans 116 123 or text HELLO to 50808; in the UK, Samaritans 116 123; in the US and Canada, call or text 988; in Australia, Lifeline 13 11 14; elsewhere, findahelpline.com lists free helplines by country. [5]

Sources and further reading

Original prompts informed by the sources below; this sheet is not a diagnostic questionnaire.

1. NHS - How to talk about your mental health (www.nhs.uk)
2. NIMH - Talking with a health care provider (www.nimh.nih.gov)
3. NHS - What to ask your doctor (www.nhs.uk)
4. NIMH - Bipolar Disorder (www.nimh.nih.gov)
5. HSE - Get urgent help for a mental health crisis (www2.hse.ie)

Sources checked 2 October 2026. The organisations cited have not endorsed this resource. Support lines checked 25 October 2026.

More free information and support routes

Support while you wait for an appointment

Scan for Find Help, or visit jonathanhaverkampf.com and choose Find Help.

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