

How to Ask Family and Friends for Help

Asking for emotional support is difficult for most of us. There are many reasons it's hard to ask for help, including unrealistic and unwarranted thoughts of being a burden, not wanting to appear selfish, not wanting to appear weak or incompetent or even fears of rejection.

At the same time, when we take a step back from these negative automatic thoughts, we can often recognize the evidence suggests the opposite. That our family, friends and coworkers are here for us and that they would be happy to help - just as we would be happy to help them in their time of need.

Asking for Help is a Skill

In fact, reaching out for help is a **sign of strength**. Being able to ask for help signals a person with good problem-solving skills who can tap into their various tools and resources to meet a need and address a concern. To that end, below are some tips to help you build the important skill of asking for help.

1. **Decide to ask for help.** While asking for help can be uncomfortable, it is an important skill to develop. We all need help at some time or another. There might be pros and cons, but the long-term benefits of asking for help often outweigh any short-term costs.
2. **Prepare your request in advance.** Prepare what you are asking for so you can be clear in your request. Knowing what you specifically need can help you communicate even if you are feeling anxious during the process. If you're not sure exactly what kind of help you need, ask if you can talk it over together. For example:
 - "I would love it if you could..."
 - "I need you to listen to me but not fix anything"
 - "I need support with..."
 - "I would appreciate your wisdom about..."
1. **Challenge your negative thoughts and assumptions about asking for help.** Self-criticism, the internal dialogue about how someone will "see" you and trying to mind read by predicting other thoughts and beliefs can discourage help-seeking.
2. **Consider whom to ask for various requests and support.** Think about who has the skills, wisdom, life experience, ability or knowledge to help you effectively – and who is likely to respond well to the request.
3. **Consider when to ask for help.** If possible, give someone time to consider your request for help, and try to avoid asking when the other person may be stressed.
4. **When someone agrees to help, let them.** Getting help can mean giving up some control. Let the helper take ownership of what they have agreed to do. And express gratitude towards yourself for having the strength to ask for help and for the helper for their time and support.

5. **If a person is unable to help, do not give up and consider another resource.** If an individual is unable to meet your request at that time, do not give up on asking for help. Getting help may require asking several people. Try not to assume the worst about why someone turned you down. Everyone is dealing with their own life stressors and may or may not be able to help given their own circumstances.

Here when you need us.

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