

For People with Mental Health Problems

If you have, or believe you may have, a mental health problem, it can be helpful to talk about these issues with others. It can be scary to reach out for help, but it is often the first step to helping you heal, grow, and recover.

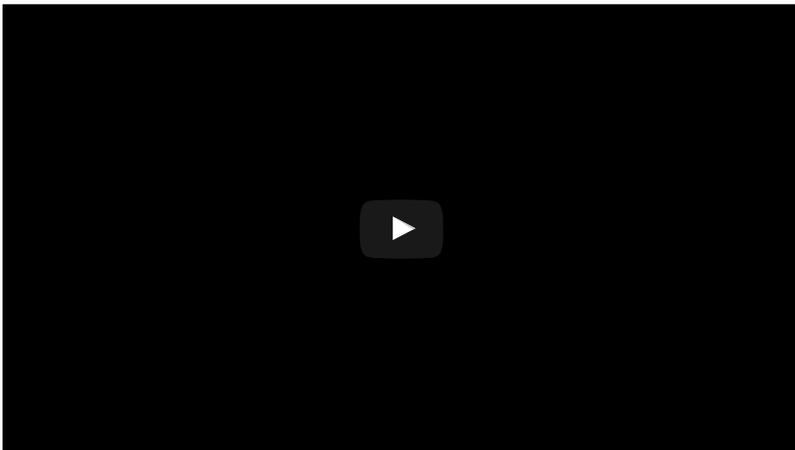
Having a good support system and engaging with trustworthy people are key elements to successfully talking about your own mental health.

Build Your Support System

Find someone—such as a parent, family member, teacher, faith leader, health care provider or other trusted individual, who:

- Gives good advice when you want and ask for it; assists you in taking action that will help
- Likes, respects, and trusts you and who you like, respect, and trust, too
- Allows you the space to change, grow, make decisions, and even make mistakes
- Listens to you and shares with you, both the good and bad times
- Respects your need for confidentiality so you can tell him or her anything
- Lets you freely express your feelings and emotions without judging, teasing, or criticizing
- Works with you to figure out what to do the next time a difficult situation comes up
- Has your best interest in mind

Related Video



If you have, or believe you may have, a mental health problem, it may be helpful to talk about these issues with others. John Saunders, sports journalist, shares a personal story of hope and recovery from mental health problems.

Find a Peer Group

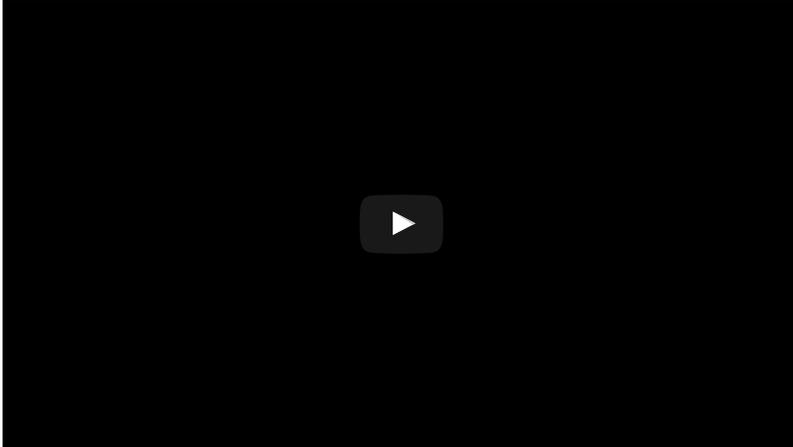
Find a group of people with mental health problems similar to yours. Peer support relationships can positively affect individual recovery because:

- People who have common life experiences have a unique ability to help each other based on a shared history and a deep understanding that may go beyond what exists in other relationships

- People offer their experiences, strengths, and hopes to peers, which allows for natural evolution of personal growth, wellness promotion, and recovery
- Peers can be very supportive since they have “been there” and serve as living examples that individuals can and do recover from mental health problems
- Peers also serve as advocates and support others who may experience discrimination and prejudice

You may want to start or join a self-help or peer support group. National organizations across the country have peer support networks and peer advocates. Find an organization that can help you connect with [peer groups and other peer support](#).

Related Video



"It's time to promote appropriate and accessible services for all those in need," said Cher. She goes on to discuss the importance of talking about mental health problems, and not being afraid to tell someone about a potential problem.

Participate in Your Treatment Decisions

It's also important for you to be educated, informed, and engaged about your own mental health.

- Find out as much as you can about [mental health wellness](#) and information specific to your [diagnosed mental health problem](#).
- Play an [active role in your own treatment](#)  (PDF – 856 KB).

Get involved in your treatment through shared decision making. Participate fully with your mental health provider and make informed treatment decisions together. Participating fully in shared decision making includes:

- Recognizing a decision needs to be made
- Identifying partners in the process as equals
- Stating options as equal
- Exploring understanding and expectations
- Identifying preferences
- Negotiating options/concordance
- Sharing decisions
- Arranging follow-up to evaluate decision-making outcomes

[Learn more about shared decision making](#) .

Develop a Recovery Plan

Recovery is a process of change where individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Studies show that most people with mental health problems get better, and many recover completely.

You may want to develop a written recovery plan. Recovery plans:

- Enable you to identify goals for achieving wellness
- Specify what you can do to reach those goals
- Can be daily activities as well as longer term goals
- Track your mental health problem
- Identify triggers or other stressful events that can make you feel worse, and help you learn how to manage them

You can develop these plans with family members and other supporters. [Learn more about recovery.](#)

