

A Health Campaign of Uniformed Services University, www.usuhs.edu, and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Bethesda, Maryland, www.CSTSonline.org

‘ASKING FOR HELP’: *Do You Know How?*

For many people, ‘asking for help’ is not as easy as it sounds. Yet, not asking for help, or asking too late, can turn a manageable situation into something more serious, which ultimately may require more care, and therefore more time.

Not asking for help or asking too late can affect not just one’s health and well being, but also that of one’s family, especially one’s children.

‘Asking for help’ is something we are taught from a very young age. We learn to ask politely, communicate what we need, and then say ‘thank you’ once help is given. As we get older, asking for help is often confused with or feared as a personal weakness or vulnerability. In fact, asking for help is most often viewed as a sign of strength and good

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judgment.

The stress of deployments, single parenting, family reintegration and changes in family routines due to separations or the injuries of war make ‘asking for help’ an important skill for service members and military families.

This *Courage to Care* fact sheet provides 4 simple steps involved in ‘asking for help’ as well as some reminders on how to ask for help. Using these steps and reminders will enable you to engage individuals and a multitude of available resources for health and mental health care, financial advice, spiritual support and many aspects of every day life (childcare, school and community services) that can be of benefit to you and those you love.

Asking for Help: 4 Simple Steps

1. **Accept:** This is perhaps the most important step. Acknowledging the need for assistance is important, but equally important is the willingness to accept help. Being able to freely ask for help requires accepting limitations and believing that you are truly deserving of the help.
2. **Assess:** Take the time to think through exactly what you need. This allows you to think about what is ‘most important’ and help shape your request. Most people will be willing to help when you ask. Help them by being specific on how they can help.
3. **Ask!:** This is your time to take action and where you make the request! Remember, in-person requests are best — but not always possible. Being courteous, direct, and specific regarding the request are the rules.
4. **Again:** As with any skill, it requires practice. So, if it helped, do it again! A nice final touch would not only be to thank the person, but also to share about how much he/she has helped.

Reminders

- **Be resourceful** — Think about who may be able to help (even those who might say no).
- **Be courteous** — Asking nicely goes a long way. Most people are willing to help with both big and small tasks. Always say, “thank you”, whether they agree to help you or not.
- **Be specific** — Most people are willing to help, they just have to know ‘how’. Being specific allows for best results. It helps others understand how they can best help you. Remember, you are in the position of knowing what you need. Others can’t read your mind.
- **Be flexible** — Your plan of how others can help may not be the only one. If different ways to help are suggested, take time to consider these.
- **Be grateful** — Most important for completing the cycle of “asking” is to say “thank you.” This recognizes another’s contribution and strengthens the relationship (just in case help is needed again).

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Just as with any skill, 'asking for help' gets easier the more you practice it. Remember — asking for help is a sign of strength. Being able to identify needs and act accordingly are essential for being successful. In many ways, asking for

help has many benefits. It can make life easier for you and your family, and give the individual who helps you a sense of accomplishment and goodwill.

Courage to Care is a health promotion campaign of Uniformed Services University and its Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS). CSTS is the academic arm and a partnering Center of the Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.



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