

How to Ask for Help When You Do Not Know What to Say

You can ask for help without explaining everything at once. Choose the kind of response you want today: listening, a practical favor, or help finding care.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

SAMHSA suggests thinking about what you need, choosing someone you trust, and arranging a time and place where you can talk privately. If you are not ready for a full conversation, you can start small. [1]

Choose an opening that fits the person

Who you are asking	Original example wording	Make the request concrete
A friend or family member	Could we talk privately? I am having a hard time with my substance use. I need someone to listen before offering advice.	Could you give me ten minutes this evening?
A clinician or intake worker	I am worried about my use and want help understanding it. I do not know what kind of care to ask for.	Can I arrange an assessment, and what should I bring?
Someone who can help with a task	I want to make a call but keep putting it off.	Could you sit with me while I call? I would like to do the talking.
Someone you cannot speak with now	There is something personal I would like to discuss when we have privacy.	When would be a good time?

If the answer is not what you need

You can say: "Thank you for listening. What would help most right now is __." If the person cannot help, ask someone else or contact a care professional. Their response does not decide whether you deserve support.

Make one opening your own

My opening and request

Use a line above or your own words. You can keep the details brief.

Who, when and how

Name or role; a private place or contact method; what you will do if they are unavailable.

After the conversation

Write down any agreement in ordinary words: who will do what and when. Ask before arranging another check-in. Keep these notes somewhere private.

Sources and Further Reading

[1] SAMHSA: How to Ask for Help

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help>