

COURAGE TO CARE

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: *Facilitating Important Behaviors for Health and Family Function*

Professionals in healthcare and family support frequently encounter individuals who need, but do not know how to ask for help. When people have difficulty asking for help, manageable issues can go unaddressed and eventually require more care. Asking for help and doing so in a timely manner can positively impact the delivery of health care and enhance individual and family well being.

Asking for help is a skill we learn as a child. We learn to politely ask for help, communicate what we need, and thank the individual who has helped us. As we get older,

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“asking for help” becomes more complex as many adults question if they will be seen as weak, incompetent, or a burden on others.

Service members and families must be encouraged to ask for help in order to access and utilize valuable and available support services. This *Courage to Care*

fact sheet provides a 4-step model and sound bites to help educate about and facilitate asking for help behaviors that fosters a partnering for health, prevention, and early intervention.

Asking for Help: A Model for Facilitating Positive Patient/Client Interactions

The following, four-step model can facilitate effective asking for help behavior. These steps are applicable in other situations including seeking spiritual support, help with daily activities, childcare, talking with teachers, coaches, etc.

1. Identify the Most Immediate Needs
2. Clarify the Need
3. Discuss an Action Plan
4. Act to Address the Need

■ **Identify the Most Immediate Needs:** This is often the most challenging task for individuals seeking help. Many needs may be expressed making it difficult to determine what is most important. There may also be an absence of expressed needs, which may require asking directly: “How can I be of help?” “What do you feel is the most important thing that needs to get done?” or “What can I do to help you right now?”

■ **Clarify the Need:** Often thought of as the real planning stage, this is an opportunity to help the person be more specific about his/her needs and thus empower them.

‘What is it about the assignment that’s difficult?’ or ‘Tell me more about how your sleep could be better?’ The person asking for help may, for the first time, be expressing such need in detail, which can help them formulate a plan and consider what may be required (e.g., time, other people, money, etc.), and if it is realistic.

- **Discuss an Action Plan:** ‘Discuss’ is the key word — collaboratively think of ways to help. Resist the urge to impose a plan if there is resistance. Remember the plan of action has to be acceptable and doable by the person asking for help.
- **Act to Address the Need:** This is the final, important part in helping and, if successful, can facilitate ‘asking for help’ behavior. This involves doing your part to fulfill the action plan, but can also offer the opportunity for follow-up and feedback.

Sound Bites that Address Barriers to Asking for Help

These questions and comments may encourage individuals to ask for help.

- How may I be of help to you today?
- It’s important to ask for help before anger and frustration make things worse.

Continued

- Asking for help is seen as strength. It shows you know what you need and how to get it done.
- It's okay to ask for help. Most individuals like being

asked to be of help; it gives them an opportunity to provide their knowledge or their assistance.

- Has this visit been of help to you today?

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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