



Mental health

Stress and support



MYTH BUSTING

MYTH: "Asking for help means you're weak or crazy."

FACT: Asking for help is a skill. It's also one of the most effective things you can do when you're struggling. It takes more courage than staying silent.

WHY THIS MATTERS



1 in 5 teens experience a mental health condition in any given year. Most go unaddressed because of stigma, lack of access, or not knowing where to turn. Mental health affects your physical health, your relationships, your academic performance, and your decision-making. It is not separate from the rest of your life; it is woven through all of it.

An artistic illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a bright yellow dress, running through a heavy rain. The person is reaching out towards a brilliant, multi-pointed starburst of light in the upper left corner. The background is a dark, moody blue and purple, with white lines representing rain falling diagonally across the scene. A faint rainbow is visible in the background behind the person. The overall mood is one of hope and perseverance despite adversity.

FEELINGS ARE NOT WEAKNESSES

Teen stress is real stress, NOT an overreaction. Some common sources are academic pressure, social dynamics, family conflict, identity, the future, relationships. Short-term stress is normal. Chronic stress, though, causes real harm:

- Disrupted sleep
- Weakened immune system
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased risk of anxiety and depression

Your stress is valid. The question is how to work with it.

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU'RE NOT OKAY

NORMAL STRESS VS. SOMETHING THAT NEEDS ATTENTION:

Normal: feeling anxious before a test, sadness after a breakup, stress during a busy period

Worth addressing:

- Persistent low mood lasting two or more weeks
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- Significant changes in sleep or appetite
- Pulling away from people who care about you
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Thoughts of hurting yourself

You don't have to be in crisis to ask for help.

SHAME & STIGMA

- SHAME IS... "SOMETHING IS FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH ME."
- STIGMA IS.... "PEOPLE LIKE YOU SHOULDN'T TALK ABOUT THIS."
- BOTH ARE LIES.
- SHAME THRIVES IN SILENCE. THE MOST CONSISTENT FINDING IN MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH IS THAT TALKING TO SOMEONE (ANYONE!) HELPS.
- YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE IT FIGURED OUT BEFORE YOU REACH OUT. "I'M NOT DOING WELL AND I DON'T KNOW WHY" IS ENOUGH.



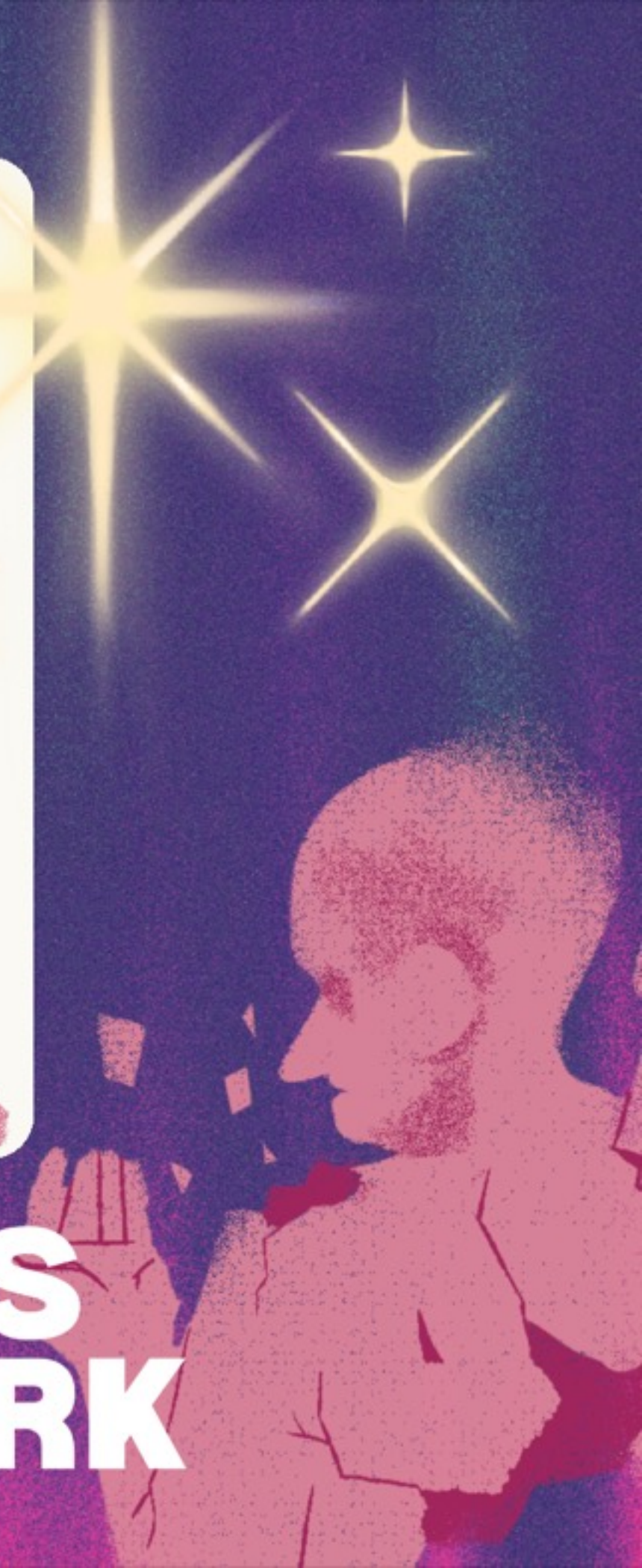


Some coping mechanisms:

- Physical movement (any kind! Walks count)
- Sleep hygiene: consistent schedule, limiting screens before bed
- Social connection: even low-effort (a text, sitting with someone)
- Journaling: writing about feelings, not just events
- Limiting doomscrolling: intentional social media time

Not useful long-term:

- Substances as emotional regulation
- Avoidance (skipping the thing doesn't shrink the anxiety around it)
- Staying busy as a way to not feel things



**COPING STRATEGIES
THAT ACTUALLY WORK**

HOW TO ASK FOR HELP

To a friend: "Hey, I've been going through something. Can we talk?"

To a trusted adult: "I've been struggling lately and I think I need to talk to someone."

To a counselor: "I'm not sure if this is serious, but something hasn't felt right and I want to talk about it."

You don't need to have a diagnosis or a crisis to deserve support. You just need to say something.



CRISIS RESOURCES

If you're in crisis or having thoughts of self-harm:

 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 (24/7, free, confidential)

 Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

 Emergency: Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room

For ongoing support:

- NAMI Teen & Young Adult Helpline: 1-800-950-6264
- Teen Line (peer support): 1-800-852-8336 or text TEEN to 839863
- [trevorproject.org](https://www.trevorproject.org) (LGBTQ+ youth)

You matter. This is temporary. Help is real.

