

Effectively Communicating Your Emotions and Needs



*A toolkit for high-school
and college-aged youths*



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mercer

Serving the New Jersey Capital Area

What does that even mean?

Effective communication plays a huge role in mental health amongst youths such as yourselves.

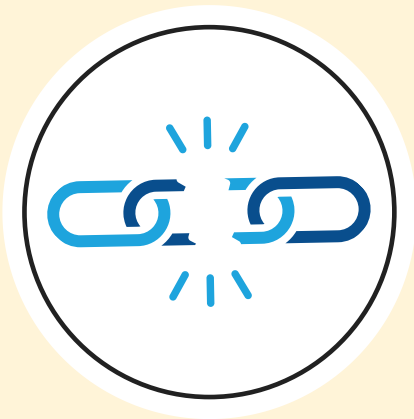


This means you can clearly express how you feel and what kind of support you need for your mental well-being to others.

This also means you can actively listen to someone else and provide support based on their mental health needs.



Why is it so difficult to communicate your feelings and needs?



Lack of trust in the help giver



Not knowing how to identify your emotions or needs



Fear of not being understood



Fear of judgement



Not wanting to "burden" someone else



Wanting to be self-reliant

It's a stress buster!

Sometimes talking to someone you trust about your feelings just helps you relieve all that built-up stress.

It serves as an important reminder...

There are times when we may need assurance that we aren't alone and that we can ask for support. Talking about how you feel just helps remind you that you aren't in this alone!

Why is it important to communicate effectively?

It helps remove stigma.

Talking to someone about your feelings and mental health needs might help that person realize that they, too, can open up to you about their burdens and mental health needs, thus removing the stigma.

It gets you to know yourself better!

In the process of talking to someone about your feelings and needs, you might be able to identify your triggers a little bit better, for example, what causes those negative emotions or behaviors for you.

Identifying the emotion vs. your mental health needs

Analyzing your emotions and gaining clarity about how you feel is the easier part, but many youths struggle with identifying what their mental health needs are.

If you feel...	You might need...
Angry or upset	• Boundaries • Some space • To be heard
Lonely	• Reassurance that you're not alone • Connection • More quality time
Anxious or Nervous	• Reassurance • Clarity • Distraction
Overwhelmed or Stressed	• Just to vent to someone • Establishing healthy boundaries • Help Prioritizing

Here's a table that might help you identify those needs!

How can you practice effective communication for your own emotions and needs?



RECOGNIZE YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

- Who do you trust and rely on?
- Identify someone who can actively hear you out.

SELF-TALK

- Verbalize your needs to yourself
- When we communicate with ourselves, it becomes easier to practice it with someone else!



ASK YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS

- Ask yourself questions that help you identify how you feel and what you might need from someone.

ASSERTIVE EXPRESSION

- Use "I" statements to convey your feelings and needs to the other person.



**Be open-minded
and judgement
free**



**Let them share as
little or as much as
they want**



**Make them feel that
they can turn to you
for help or even just to
talk about things**

How can you help someone else practice effective communication for their emotions and needs?



**Be mindful of your
own mental
health**

**Be an active listener
(listen carefully, show it
with your body
language, respond to
them, and ask
questions)**



**Avoid comparing
your situations
with theirs**

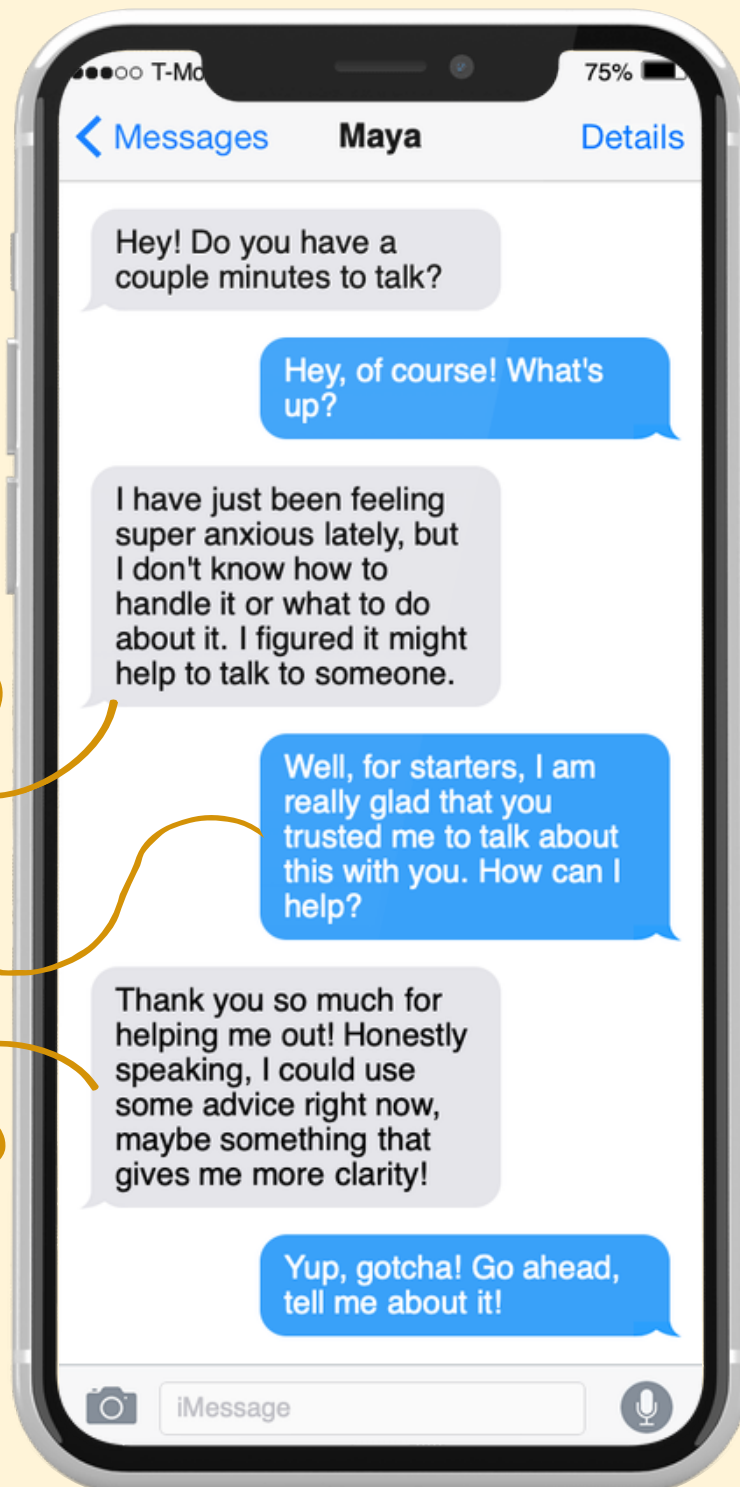
Here's an example of what a conversation built on effective communication could look like:

This conversation between Ron and his friend Maya can help us understand what effective communication looks like

MAYA MAKES SURE TO EXPRESS EXACTLY HOW SHE IS FEELING TO RON.

RON RESPONDS IN A WAY THAT SHOWS THAT HE IS INTERESTED AND WILLING TO LISTEN TO MAYA ABOUT HOW SHE IS FEELING

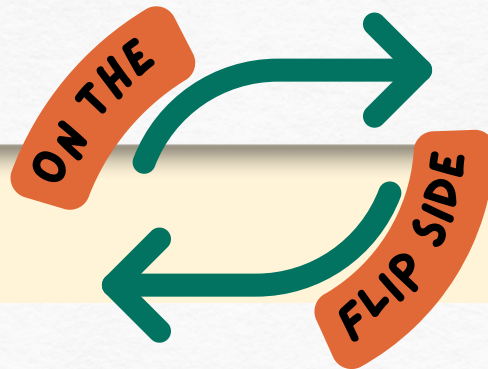
MAYA CLEARLY EXPRESSES HER MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS SO THAT RON CAN UNDERSTAND AND HELP HER OUT!



Asking the right questions is always helpful!

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Who in my support system could listen to me and help me out?
- What am I exactly feeling right now?
- Do I need a solution, advice, comfort, a distraction, or just for someone to listen to me?
- How can I convey my emotions to someone so that they can understand and help me?
- Do I need to build any boundaries or create some space?



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PERSON YOU ARE HELPING

- How are you feeling exactly at this moment?
- What can I do to help make things better for you?
- Would you like any advice, or for me to simply hear you out?
- Is there a trusted adult or professional you would be comfortable speaking to about this?

Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or Text

24/7 Lifeline

Available in English and Spanish

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline

Call: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Text: NAMI to 62640

Email: helpline@nami.org

Monday - Friday, 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM E.T.

NAMI Mercer Helpline

Call: 609-799-8994 Ext. 17

Email: helpline@namimercer.org

Monday - Friday, 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM E.T.

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Call: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

24/7 Helpline

Available in English and Spanish

Resources

**Tips for Stigma-Free
Communication About
Mental Health - CDC**



**Conversation Tips for
Connecting
Conversations - CDC**



**Communicating is More
Than Finding the Right
Words - NAMI Blog**



Author's Note

Growing up and going through high school and college, it was very important for me to have someone with whom I could communicate and share my feelings. It helped me both academically and in my personal relationships. Those conversations helped me in so many different ways; sometimes they helped relieve stress, other times they helped me feel less angry or upset. Being able to talk to someone and having them listen to me felt like I was being validated and heard.

Through this toolkit, I aim to help others do the same. I want people to find their person, whom they can rely on to both talk and listen. I want to help equip them with tools that they can use to communicate freely with their loved ones. Practicing effective communication, especially when it comes to mental health, is hard, but I hope this toolkit can help someone take at least one small, baby step towards it.