

Just ask for help

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AFTER "I love you", the three words that can be the most difficult to say are "I need help".

Why is that? Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that saying we need help is an admission of vulnerability, and today we feel under a lot of pressure to be flawless.

We live in an age of mass information, so we think we should have the knowledge to cope with everything life can throw at us.

Because we feel pressure to be brilliant at coping with life's problems, we tend to feel ashamed if our personal resources aren't enough to deal with every problem.

Being confronted with a difficult situation and having to admit you are having a rotten time, that you are trying to make things better but it's not working, can be very tough.

You can become very anxious if you feel that things are so bad you can't sort them out on your own.

You need to understand that the benefit of asking for help is that you usually feel better just for having taken that first step to get specialised help with something that is too big for you to handle.

For example, if your relationship seems to be getting out of control, just making that phone call to get an appointment with a counsellor can help you feel supported, because you are taking the first step to stop the problem getting worse.

And when you do get help from someone who is a specialist in your problem area, you suddenly find how good it feels to get help, be introduced to new ways of doing things, and have the opportunity to develop skills.

Suddenly, not only does the problem seem less serious, your self-esteem is boosted because you are getting on top of the problem and finding new inner resources to cope. And that's a good feeling.

When you seek help, it's not because you are an idiot, but because you are wise enough to realise you want a better way, or need to be inspired to get your life back on track.

Taking refuge in drugs or alcohol or burying yourself in work to avoid a problem never works in the long run. The old saying you learned at your grandmother's knee is just as true today as it was 50 years ago: a problem shared is a problem halved.

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Survival tips

- Throughout history, wise people have sought help from others to solve problems.
- Seeking help can make you more powerful, not more vulnerable.
- Just taking the first step of making an appointment with an expert will make life look brighter.