

## For Youth

Watch Video titled [Coping with An Emotional Crisis](#). The video contains content related to child trauma experiences, including abuse and neglect that may not be suitable for all audiences. Viewer discretion is advised.

### Who Can I Talk To?

*Have you experienced a traumatic event? Do you feel sad, anxious, or scared and may not understand why? Do you feel different or not like yourself since the event happened? Do you wish things were different? **You are not alone.***

Many people have situations that might make them feel unsafe at home, and they might be afraid or scared to tell someone. The most important thing to remember is that talking about what is happening can help you feel better and ensure that you have a safe place to call home.

There are people that care about you that want to help. If you do not already have a trauma-focused therapist to talk to about a traumatic experience, the following suggestions may help you think about who else you can open up to.

### School Social Worker\*

Many schools have an academic counseling department (school counselors) a social worker, or a mental health counselor (therapist). These individuals are available to help you with your school work and support you through difficult times. Academic counselors typically help you with your classes whereas mental health counselors usually talk with you about your feelings or behavior. Both are very important and are available during school and sometimes after school! To talk with a school social worker, you can request an appointment through your counseling department or you can talk to a teacher who you know and trust to help you set up an appointment.

### Teacher\*

If you have a favorite class or favorite teacher, you might feel comfortable talking to this person alone about what you are going through. If you do not feel comfortable telling your teacher how you are feeling right away, you can schedule a meeting with the teacher about school work. This may eventually lead you to feel more comfortable with him/her over time to talk about your personal experiences. A teacher could also include a coach, choir director, or club director.

### Peers, Siblings, and Friends

If you feel afraid or scared in your own home, with someone you know, or because something happened to you or someone you love, your siblings might be feeling that way too. Your friends and peers can also be a great place to find support. It is most important that you talk with someone you trust about how you feel. If your sibling is close in age to you, think about talking to a trustworthy adult or professional in order to help keep you both safe. It is best if you can find an adult who you trust, but friends can be good resources as well.

## Trustworthy Adult

There may be an adult or many adults in your life whom you trust and with whom you feel comfortable talking. These could include your:

- Parent figure
- Foster parent
- Grandparent
- Aunt / Uncle
- Adult Friendly Neighbor
- Adult Family Friend

Think about a person who makes you feel comfortable, safe, and better when you are sad or scared. When you are ready, you can set up a time to meet up with this person to talk about how you are feeling. If you are not comfortable setting up a “meeting” time, you can find other times to talk to a caregiver like when:

- Watching TV
- Driving home from school
- Before bed
- By phone, email, or text

## Anonymous & Confidential Youth Hotlines\*

A hotline is a phone number that you can call if you want to talk to someone. A hotline that is **anonymous** means that you do not have to tell the person on the other end of the phone who you are and they will not ask for your name or information if you want to remain anonymous. A hotline that is **confidential** means that everything that is said on the phone stays between you and the person on the other end. Most youth hotlines are 1-800 numbers that are free of charge. Many youth hotlines now have online chatting and texting features as a way of communicating confidentially and anonymously. There are hotlines to address many issues including abuse, neglect, runaway, substance abuse, and pregnancy amongst others. Youth hotlines provide a safe space for you to talk to someone and receive resources (i.e., suggestions and ideas about other places you can find help).

*\*A note on confidentiality: The people listed above (teachers, school social workers, hotline workers) make it a priority to keep you safe. If they learn or suspect that you are being harmed or are at risk of harming yourself or others, they are required by law to tell other professionals parts of what you’ve told them. You can always ask the person about what they are required to tell and what they are allowed to keep secret. They do this to keep you safe and to ensure that you won’t be harmed.*

## I Want To Tell My Story...What Do I Say?

Now that you have figured out who you want to talk to, the next step is figuring out what to say. This can be really scary, overwhelming, or sometimes embarrassing. When thinking about talking to another person about your experience, you may start to feel your heart racing, your body temperature rise, have lots of energy, feel sad, sick, or shy. These, and many other feelings, are all normal reactions. There is no right or wrong way to tell someone and there is no right or wrong place to speak up. Do what is most comfortable for you. Below are some different ways of sharing your story:

- Writing a note, text, letter, or email
- Drawing a picture and giving it to the person you trust
- Describing your experience with your eyes closed to the other person

- Singing your experience (in your own words to a made up song or a tune that you know)

Just do your best. Take a deep breath and share what you can. It is your experience to share and you don't have to keep it inside. Remember, you chose to speak to this person because you trust him or her. The person makes you feel safe and supports you. Starting is the hardest part, but sharing your experience and talking with someone is the first step!

## **Already In Counseling or Therapy?**

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your experience with your therapist.

### **Be honest.**

- The more honest you are with your therapist, the better they get to know the real you.

### **Ask questions.**

- How long have you been a therapist? What is your background? What is your experience?
- Are you going to tell my parents what I tell you? My foster parents? My caseworker? The court judge?
- How long will I be in therapy?
- What are we going to do in therapy?

### **Practice.**

- Sometimes a therapist will give assignments or strategies to help you think about a situation differently. When you are outside of the therapist's office, try and practice the different techniques, tricks, or tips that your therapist shared with you to help improve the way you feel or behave.

### **Give it a chance.**

- Depending on what might be going on for you, therapy might seem like it is taking longer than you may have wanted. Try and give your therapist a chance to get to know you and for you to get to know your therapist. Remember, therapy gives you a space to say and learn about what you need to feel better.
- Adults in your life may go with you to some of your sessions. Some therapists might even encourage your family to be there and be in session with you. A therapist can help your parent or caregiver understand how their behavior might affect you. This may or may not feel comfortable for you at first, but therapy may be more successful if everyone is working towards the same goals.

### **Be open minded.**

- Your therapist might come up with suggestions for activities that you have not heard of before that could feel out of your comfort zone. They may have seen these activities work for other kids and that is why they are suggesting them for you. Try to be open minded! After trying the activity, you can always let your therapist know if it doesn't work for you and you can come up with new ideas together.