**How can talking help?**
Skilled listeners range from crisis line support workers to professional counsellors and help to:
- Give new ideas for how to get “unstuck” and think about your life in new ways.
- Raise confidence, self-esteem, and improve communication and relationships with others.
- Lower anxiety and cope with depression symptoms.

**When do I know I need to talk to someone?**
There are many reasons it can be helpful to talk with someone else, such as when:
- You feel stressed or it seems difficult to concentrate.
- Something scary or violent happened around you.
- Your relationships with other people have changed or disappeared.
- You are ready to gather more information about what you want to do next.

**What can I expect when I talk to someone?**
The first time you talk to someone, the supportive listener will:
- Do their best to help you feel comfortable and talk about their training and ways to help.
- May ask you to write some answers to questions, to help them understand your concerns.
- Explain that what you share is confidential and can be kept private unless you tell them information that puts you or someone else at risk for harm.

**What do I need to do to prepare?**
If there is anything specific you need to bring or do, you will be provided with directions. It is helpful to plan for spending about one hour if you see someone in person.

**What can I talk about?**
Skilled listeners are available to talk about whatever you decide is important to share.

**Where can I find someone to talk with?**
There are skilled listeners you can reach out to and many places you can look for information. The important step is gathering the courage to start. Talking to a skilled listener may occur over the phone or in an office.

**For information you could:**
- Talk to someone you trust. They may know of a counsellor you can talk to.
- Speak with a doctor about your concerns, and they can help you with ideas.
- 24 hours a day you can telephone 211 or visit [www.ab.211.ca](http://www.ab.211.ca).
- Go to [www.informalberta.ca](http://www.informalberta.ca) on the web.
- Six days a week, you can walk-in and speak with a counsellor. Information is available at: [www.walkinedmonton.org](http://www.walkinedmonton.org).
- Go to [www.wellnessnetworkedmonton.com](http://www.wellnessnetworkedmonton.com) on the web or call 780-488-0851.

**Other Places to Call:**
- Distress Line 780-482-HELP (4357)
- Teens Help Phone 1-800-668-6688 [www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/)
- The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton 780-423-4121

**Alberta Health Services (AHS) (interpreter services, 24 hours)**
- Addiction Helpline 1-866-332-2322
- Community Urgent Services 780-342-7777
- Alberta-wide Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642
- Health Link 1-866-408-5465 (LINK)
- Children’s Mental Health Crisis Line 780-427-3391 (no overnight services)

**Other Government of Alberta Helplines**
- Family Violence Info Line 310-1818
- Bullying Helpline 1-888-456-2323
- Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-387-5437
TALK TO AN EXPERT PROFESSIONAL
There are experts, who have research-based strategies to assist you with your concerns.

Who are professionals I can talk to?

Counsellors and therapists are people who take specific training, belong to professional associations, and have ethical standards of practice to ensure they provide helpful services. There are many kinds of counsellors and therapists, and it is your right to ask about their training, associations and standards.

Psychologists have specific training in psychology and many ways of approaching therapy. They help people deal with their feelings and attitudes and develop healthier and more effective patterns of behavior. Many private insurance plans will pay some or all of the cost of seeing a psychologist.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who are trained to focus on specific mental health issues and when needed, they will prescribe medications. In Alberta, their services are always free.

How do I set up my first visit with a professional?

- Alberta Health Services (AHS) provides experts in mental health. Visit www.albertahealthservices.ca or you can call Health Link at 1-866-408-5465 (LINK) at any time. AHS services are free, and usually require intake and an appointment for a first visit.
- Other mental health professionals are employed in organizations. Some organizations respond to specific concerns and others are more general and can help anyone with any concern. Call 211 or visit www.ab.211.ca for details.
- You can also review websites if you have a specific need, as there are many professionals who advertise their services to connect to clients directly such as www.psychologytoday.com.
- Some employers provide professionals through a company Employee Assistance Plan and with extended health benefit options.

What will the first visit be like?

It’s natural to feel nervous on your first visit, and the professional will provide options to help you begin. They will review how they can help, what you can expect to gain, your rights as a client, and may be able to provide or sign a note that you attended counselling. They will also talk about additional counselling visits and next steps.

Will my family know?

Most things you say to a mental health professional are confidential. But they have to act if you or someone else is at risk of serious harm or if a court orders them to give up information. If you are 18 or over, you are considered an adult. If you are under 18, the laws are different. It is best to talk with the professional about this so that you can build trust with them.

How long can I get help?

This is an important thing to talk about with the professional you meet with because the answers can be different. The number of visits you can have changes from place to place. It can also depend on whether the service is free or if you are paying. Mental health professionals will be able to help you find other places and people to talk with if they are not able to keep seeing you.

Produced by the Mental Health Literacy Project Working Group:

- Compass Centre for Sexual Wellness www.compasscentre.ca
- Walk-in Counselling Society of Edmonton www.walkinedmonton.org
- Office of Alberta Health Advocates: Mental Health www.mhpa.ab.ca
- Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMS) www.ismss.ualberta.ca
- United Way of the Alberta Capital Region www.myunitedway.ca

Do I have to see my Doctor first?

No. You don’t need to see a doctor before you talk to a mental health professional. However, your doctor may be able to help suggest someone you can talk with, so this may be an option.

What is the cost to talk to a professional?

Alberta Health Services provides licensed mental health professionals for free. Many other professionals can do the same or may ask you to consider a payment based on your income. This is called a “sliding fee” (it slides up or down based on income) so people who make more money are charged more for the same counselling service. It is your right to ask about fees and costs including parking, paperwork, and missed appointments.

If you cannot pay for services, let the professional know when you contact them. They may help you find other places and people to talk with, as they may have options within their organization. If there is a fee, many health care plans cover some or all of the cost of visiting a licensed professional.