

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK **SAD, WORRIED** AND ANGRY TEENS



PART OF THE CEDAR COLLEGE **HELPING TEENS RESOURCES** AVAILABLE AT WWW.CEDARCOLLEGE.SA.EDU.AU

When your teen is sad, worried, or angry, asking really good, specific and smart questions is invaluable. And ask lots of them!

Asking the right questions in the right situation - and doing it on multiple occasions - helps people feel cared for, figure out what they need and what to do. It helps them learn to express themselves, seek out the right advice, get the reassurance they need to cope and how to plan out coping strategies.

Its unfortunate that many people don't ask each other good questions, very often. In fact, people often don't ask any questions of each other at all. This is a huge shame, because asking the right questions can change lives.

Here's why:

1 When you ask questions of a sad/worried/upset/angry person (child, teen or adult) - it shows them you care about them.

Nothing shows interest, care and compassion better than asking questions. On the flip side - if you don't ask - people think you aren't interested or don't care. Sure, you often hear about teens who are annoyed at their parents "bugging them" with "too many questions". Plenty of teens are hurting far more because their parents never ask them anything except "how was school?"

2 When you ask questions of a sad/worried/upset/angry person (child, teen or adult) - it helps you know how you can help.

When someone is hurting, we often jump in with advice, suggestions and reassurance before finding out what is really



going on. We try to make things better before we really have the details. To help effectively, we need to ask way more questions than we think we need to. Asking lots of questions makes us much more effective when helping young people.

3 When you ask questions of a sad/worried/upset/angry person (child, teen or adult) - it helps them talk, express themselves and figure stuff out.

People - old and young - who have an opportunity to talk about what they think, what has happened to them, how they feel, and what they want - cope better than people who don't have that same opportunity. Asking kids and teens questions gives them mini expression practice opportunities - this is absolutely invaluable for the development of their emotional well being.

Of course, asking good questions is easier said than done.

Attached are 50 question starters for you. I hope they help you think about just one extra question you can ask that young person who is having a hard time. Don't under-estimate how valuable it might be to someone's life.

REMEMBER - you will have to adjust the questions listed over according to the age of the young person, the relationship you have with them, and the situation you are in.

Question ideas for sad, worried and angry teens

What do you wish was different? What's the hardest part about that?

Are you thinking about anything bad that might happen?

What was the sad bit there for you?

What are you thinking might go wrong here?

What else has happened that makes this worse?

Do you know why you feel upset about this, or do you just feel upset?

What is the worst thing about that?

What else is hard about that situation?

Do you feel more sad/hurt/angry/worried about that or some other feeling? Are you worried about people thinking this?

On a scale from 1-10, how worried/upset/mad/scared/hurt are you about this? Okay, so how about compared to this other thing? What is worse - this OR this?

What makes it better this OR this?

If I was you, I might feel worried about this - how about you?

I can imagine other people feeling pretty hurt about that - how does it feel? How does that affect you?

When you aren't busy/when you are lying in bed at night - what are the things that make you most upset?

Is there anything about this you feel embarrassed or ashamed about?

What are the some of the things you're worried people might be thinking about you?

How often are you feeling upset about it?

What do you wish you could change about yourself in all of this?

What makes you feel a bit better about all of this?

What's the most frustrating part of it all?

What do you think people don't understand about this?

What would make this a little better?

What is coming up in your week that will be hard because of this?

When was the last time you cried about this?

What else is going on for you that doesn't help?

What are the worst times for you?

If I did THIS to help - would that be good or not?

Why do you think that made you so mad/upset/worried?

Can I talk to someone about this for you?

Is there someone else you would like to talk to about this?

Has anything else helped in the past?

What helps you cope?

This might seem like a dumb question, but do you know why you are most upset about that?

What times of day are the hardest for you?

When do you most think about this?

Are there any times you feel better about this?

What can I do to help?

What things trigger that off for you?

What do you wish was different about other people in this situation?

If you could change anything about that, what would you change?

Is there anything you feel like you need to keep a secret/hidden from others?

What are the three things you keep thinking about this?

What are your options?

What would be one step forward here?

Is there anything you can do to change that?

If you had unlimited powers to change things, what would you do?