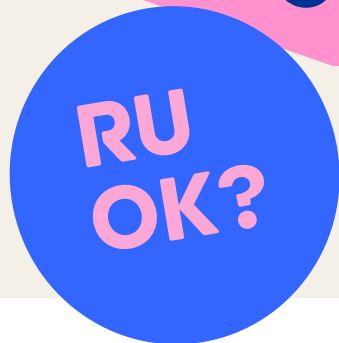


# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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# Hello!

Thank you for your interest in Hey Sam. This kit has tools to help you learn more about Hey Sam, spread the word, and better support the young people in your community. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure young adults get the support they need.

# First, a little history

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Hey Sam was created by Samaritans. Based in Boston, Samaritans has been providing lifesaving suicide prevention services since 1974. All of our services are completely free to the public.

Hey Sam is Samaritans' peer-to-peer support textline — designed for and staffed by people up to 24 years old — created to address the urgent mental health needs of young people.

Young adulthood is a time of big transition, and we know that young people are facing a growing mental health crisis:

- Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people 15-24 years old.
- 1 in 3 teenage girls seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- More than 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ students attempted suicide in the past year.
- More than half of transgender and non-binary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- Suicide attempts among Black teens have increased a staggering 73% over the last 25 years.
- In 2022, 22% of Hispanic/Latino high school students seriously considered suicide.

Research and experience tells us that youth are more likely to open up to peers than adults, and that peer-to-peer support can be a helpful resource for young people when they are struggling. Hey Sam is here to lend a nonjudgmental ear, offer a kind presence, and help people feel understood and validated.

# Befriending

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Samaritans and Hey Sam know that community and connection are core to mental health — that’s why our proven befriending model is so powerful. Befriending is a compassionate and empathetic approach to providing emotional support. It’s like being a trusted friend who is there to listen without judgment, offer understanding, and allow the other person to openly express themselves.

A big part of befriending is active listening. When a young person texts Hey Sam, our volunteers focus on their words, emotions, and concerns, without giving advice or trying to solve their problems. Instead, we help the person explore their thoughts and emotions, helping them get clarity and perspective on their situation. They take the lead in the conversation and make their own decisions about how to navigate their emotions or challenges.

To sum it up, here are the key ingredients of befriending on the Hey Sam textline:

**Validation:** Acknowledging and accepting feelings and experiences rather than questioning or minimizing them

**Reflection:** Showing that we understand what someone is saying and that we are listening intently

**Open-ended questions:** Inviting someone to reflect and/or elaborate on what they’ve been sharing in a way that gets to the core of the pain they’re texting in about

# Building a movement

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We are working to build a future where all young people have access to mental health support. We are doing our part to break the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide so no one feels ashamed or scared to ask for help. We are fighting for the resources we need to strengthen mental health access for all. We are learning and providing the skills to increase resilience for ourselves and our communities.

Our vision is for mental health support to be available whenever, wherever, and however young people need it; for our communities to be mobilized and activated to support young people; and for individuals, schools, employers, organizations, and government to work together to prioritize mental health and wellbeing.

**I think it's imperative young people have access to mental health resources, especially if they are too scared to reach out to a family member.**

ELISSA, HEY SAM VOLUNTEER

# Spreading the word

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It takes a whole community to support the mental health of our young people — we can't do it without you! We need your help letting people know this vital resource exists.

## **Schedule a free workshop with Samaritans**

Our workshops teach youth how to recognize warning signs of suicide, support someone who is struggling, and promote mental health. Workshops are available for middle and high schools, colleges and universities, and community organizations, and can be in-person or virtual. [samaritanshope.org/workshop](https://samaritanshope.org/workshop)



## **Volunteer opportunities**

Encourage the young people in your world to join our team! They will learn a ton about befriending and crisis support through our training, join a supportive community of peers, and build lifelong skills.

## **Word of mouth**

Tell your community about us — this includes talking about Hey Sam directly with the youth you serve, colleagues, supervisors... anyone who could use or direct people to our services!

## **Promote Hey Sam IRL**

Provided in this kit are Hey Sam posters and stickers — hang them anywhere they will be seen by the youth you work with. We've also included other materials we hope will help prompt conversations about mental health.

## **Share on social**

- Follow us on Instagram @textheysam
- Tag us in photos of posters and stickers in the wild
- Use #textheysam #youarenotalone across social media

# Supporting youth in crisis

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While Hey Sam is always available as a resource for youth who are struggling, if a young person in your life has opened up to you personally about mental health struggles or suicidal thoughts, it is important to be an active and attentive listener in the moment.

Try asking open-ended questions, such as:

- “What are these emotions like for you?”
- “What brought these feelings on?”
- “What do you normally do when you feel like this?”
- “How can I help you right now?”
- “What is it like for you to talk about this?”


It is imperative that someone who is struggling feels accepted in their feelings. Using validating statements, like the following, can help them feel heard:


- “It sounds like you are going through a lot right now.”
- “I’m so glad we’re talking about this.”
- “It takes a lot of courage to talk about this — I’m here to listen.”
- “It’s okay to feel that way.”
- “This isn’t something you should have to go through alone.”

Included in this package are lists of mental health resources for youth of various backgrounds, experiences, and identities — you can refer young people to those organizations and services in addition to the Hey Sam textline.

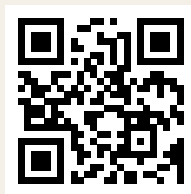


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