

# Inter) Personal Best

*Tools for the Work of Life*

## Real Men and Women

# Do Ask for Help

It seems to be a universal joke that men don't like to ask for directions when they're lost, but the truth is that few people—**male or female**—like to ask for help. And the more we need help, the harder it can be to ask.

What stops us? Pride. Fear of rejection. A sense that we should be able to take care of ourselves. A lack of faith in other people. Not wanting to inconvenience anybody. Not knowing exactly what to ask for. A reluctance to show vulnerability. A desire to avoid feeling like we “owe” someone.

On the other hand, most people want to *be* of help. Helping someone allows us to be useful, express our love, and feel important, competent, and needed. But we can't always help other people because we don't always know what they need from us.

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*Complain to one who can help you.*

*Yugoslav Proverb*

# How to ask for help

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## HOW TO ASK FOR HELP

- + Remind yourself that it's okay to ask for help.
- + Carefully identify your problem and what you are asking for.
- + Picture the potential results of both scenarios. What will it be like if you do get help? What will it be like if you don't?
- + Choose someone to ask whom you trust—and who will know how to help you.
- + Accept that you may feel uncomfortable while asking.
- + Practice what you are going to say. A good way to start is, "I need your help."
- + You don't have to apologize for asking for help.
- + Make sure it's a convenient time for the other person to talk with you.
- + It's okay to ask for help via phone or in writing. But, remember, emails do get lost!
- + Recognize that sometimes you may receive a "no" response to your request.

## ASKING FOR HELP FROM SPECIFIC PEOPLE

- + **Spouse/Partner:** As with many conversations with your spouse/partner, it's good to use "I" statements. For instance, it's better to say, "I would really appreciate it if you did the cooking for a week while I finish writing my paper," rather than, "You never cook enough."
- + **Relatives and Friends:** Be specific and don't just drop hints. Say, "Could you watch the kids on Friday night while I go to the movies?" rather than "Gee I wish I could get out more."
- + **Your Boss/Coworkers:** Unfortunately, there really are bosses and coworkers who see requests for help as signs of weakness. So the first step is to identify whom you can trust. Second, unless you've made a big mistake, don't apologize for asking for help. Simply lay out the situation and explain what needs to be done. Third, make sure you have a few options for how the other people can help you—and ask if they have any additional suggestions. If you involve them in problem-solving, all of you will be working toward the same goal, and you won't end up in the role of petitioner. Fourth, don't whine. Don't say, "Why do they always give me too much work, it's not fair." Do say, "In order to make this deadline, it would really help me if you could take over this step in the process."
- + **Other People:** When dealing with, say, customer service people on the phone, remember that people want to feel good about themselves—and want to feel powerful. If you say, "Your company is terrible and my phone service stinks and you'd better fix it," they may dig in and oppose you. But if you say, "I could really use your help. My phone isn't working and it's really important to my business," then you've given them the opportunity to feel strong and useful.
- + **Your Child(ren):** Kids love to feel like adults. Have a family meeting, explain the situation, and ask them how they can help—and you may be delighted at their ideas. Even a 4- or 5-year-old can help set the table. Older kids can make simple breakfasts. And by the time they're in their teens, your children may be better at fixing the computer or doing online research than you are.
- + **Your Healthcare Provider:** In order for your healthcare provider to help you, you have to help him or her first. Jot down all of your symptoms. Have a list of every medication you take, with dosages—and include vitamins, herbs, and alternative remedies. Know your family medical history. And tell your healthcare provider your personal preferences. Do you want to be a partner in decision-making, or do you want the healthcare provider to tell you what to do?

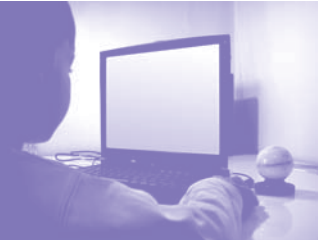
## AFTER YOU ASK FOR HELP

Once someone has given you help, make sure to actually use what he or she gives—otherwise, that person won't feel inspired to help again! Saying "thank you" is a given, but consider going a step further. Write a note to a helpful healthcare provider. Bring cookies to your coworker. Tell the customer service rep's boss what a good job he or she did. And, of course, help other people when you can.

It's always possible that the other person cannot or chooses not to help you. That's the other person's right! Thank him or her for listening. Later, in private, if necessary, take some time to feel disappointed or angry, but don't let the experience stop you from asking for assistance in the future.

And remember: your EAP is an excellent place to get help for a myriad of issues.

# Kids in Cyberspace: The Facts About Internet Safety



The Internet provides tremendous educational and social networking resources. But what makes the combination of young people and the Internet so potentially dangerous? Natural curiosity, interest in sex, a need for approval and acceptance by peers, and a feeling of invulnerability are all hallmarks of adolescence, and they all play a part in jeopardizing young people's safety, especially online, where predators can easily camouflage themselves, and other teens can be malicious and harassing.

Productive-sounding keyboard clacking might make you think that homework is getting done, but research on children's use of the Internet, instant messaging (IM), and email points to less reassuring use of time online.

Without the proper guidance, kids can fall prey to those who abuse the false sense of security that young people—and adults—often feel on websites, in chat rooms, and while using IM. The problem is far from benign: at the very least, youngsters can become distressed and frightened from receiving unsolicited sexual materials, harassing emails, or prying IMs. At worst, they can be lured into meeting online “friends” in person, with potentially disastrous results.

The Youth Internet Safety Survey, conducted by the University of New Hampshire, collected information about online victimization through telephone interviews with 1,501 Internet users aged 10 to 17. Almost one in five of the young people said they received an unwanted sexual solicitation in the previous year, five percent were recipients of solicitations that made them feel “extremely upset,” and three percent received “an aggressive solicitation involving offline contact or attempts or requests for offline contact.” Nearly half of the solicitations were not disclosed “due to embarrassment and guilt” because of their sexual nature.

The survey participants who already had troubled lives were more likely to have online romances and face-to-face meetings with people they met on the Internet. The researchers state that “youth who communicate well with their friends and family have people to talk with about online encounters, can get advice about behavior they find weird or unnerving, and, therefore, develop a sense of appropriate and inappropriate online behavior. Youth with problems may be less likely to get good advice and feedback.”

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

- Keeping communication with children and teens open—and nonjudgmental—will help them make good decisions about their behavior both online and in person and will make them more likely to come to you if they do feel threatened.
- Adequately supervising kids' computer use is essential. A study by Cox Communications and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children showed that half of parents either do not have or do not know if they have software that monitors where their teens go online and with whom they interact. Almost as many do not review what their children read or type in chat rooms or via IM. And nearly one third of parents allow their teens to use computers in private rooms, although experts urge adults to keep youngsters' computers in open areas that can be supervised.
- Learning about the Internet and online communications will help you understand what your kids are experiencing in cyberspace. For example, take a look at websites like MySpace.com that offer “private” pages where young people feel free to post revealing information—and sometimes suggestive or inappropriate photos. And do you know IM code lingo? For instance, what do “POS” and “P911” mean? (Find out below.) Once you realize how wide open the Internet is, you may become more concerned about online safety for both children and adults.

## COACH'S CORNER

### WORK STRATEGIES FROM THE PLAYING FIELD

**“Football isn't necessarily won by the best players.  
It's won by the team with the best attitude.”**

George H. Allen (1922-1990).

NFL football coach to the Los Angeles Rams (1966-70) and the Washington Redskins (1971-77).

## RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

### CyberNetiquette Comix

<http://disney.go.com/cybersafety/index.html>

### CyberTipline

<http://www.cybertipline.com> (to report troubling Internet incidents)

### Adolescent Directory On Line

<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/adol.html>

### NetSmartz

<http://www.netsmartz.org>

### Harris, Rothenberg International

<https://www.harrisrothenberg.com>

# The Emotional Impact of Divorce

## The Emotional Impact of Divorce

*“The world breaks everyone, and afterward, many are strong at the broken places.”*  
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

**D**ivorce is an ending: it shatters people’s hopes and dreams, it can tear families and friendships apart, and it can bankrupt people emotionally and financially. Amicable divorces are still painful, although they may not be as drawn-out and crushing.

The emotional responses to divorce tend to mimic those related to the grief process described by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying*. It may help to take a look at the grief process, which has distinct phases: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Denial allows us to ignore serious problems in a relationship. In the short term, it can be protective, but in the long term, it is highly destructive. Denial is like turning the car radio up when you hear an engine noise—if you can’t hear it, it’s not there. Feelings of doubt, unease, anxiety, fear, and dread are common as one or both individuals begin to look at the relationship.

When anger hits, it hits hard. You may experience anger at your spouse, at yourself, and at the world in general. Like denial, anger is protective; when you’re angry, you don’t

have to feel some of the other emotions. It is important to experience anger because it gives you some energy and “fight.” But it is crucial to get beyond it and deal with the other feelings that are common during and after a divorce. Staying stuck in anger leads to bitterness, resentment, and isolation. It also makes communication very difficult, if not impossible.

Bargaining is that phase where you try to magically turn things around (“If you just stay with me, I’ll never do such-and-such again” or “Maybe if I lose weight, he/she will love me again”). Feelings of desperation tend to drive the bargaining stage. Denial plays a part as well: although there may be legitimate reasons for the marriage to end, the enormity of divorce feels too overwhelming to confront.

Depression is likely to creep in. Where anger allows an *outlet* for betrayal and hurt, depression is an *inlet*, letting emotions—especially shame and embarrassment, common during divorce—flow inward. Because it’s hard to reach out during depression, you may shun those who would challenge your doubts and self-blame and offer you a different point of view.

Logically, acceptance would seem to be the final stage, that point at which you are resigned to the divorce and ready to move

on with your life. While it is true that over time you will begin to accept the inevitability of being divorced, certain triggers will likely stir up anger and hurt. You may be on and off the emotional roller coaster until acceptance becomes stronger than those other feelings.

Do not try to manage all of this on your own. Connections with friends and family are vital, and trained professionals and support groups can help both men and women alike. Reaching out to your EAP just takes one call, and the service is free and confidential.

There is life after divorce, and for many that life is full and satisfying. Some find love again, and others derive strength in remaining single. The human spirit is remarkably resilient—as Hemingway wrote, “many are strong in the broken places.”

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### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

- AARP : <http://www.aarp.org/> (search on “long-distance caregiving”)
- Family Caregiving 101: <http://www.familycaregiving101.org/>
- National Alliance for Caregiving: <http://www.caregiving.org/fcrc.htm>
- InterPersonal Best, Fall 2005: Geriatric Care Management article: <https://www.harrisrothenberg.com> (After log in, click on “Quarterly Newsletter” at the bottom right of the home page, then click on “View the Archive” and go to the Fall 2005 issue.)