

It's Okay to Talk: #itsokaytotalk

Dear Scouts,

It's Okay to Talk is a mental health initiative that let's everyone know it's okay to talk to others. It's a signal that we all have feelings, and it is a good thing to express them in a positive way, such as talking with a friend or family member. To help promote this message, I'm asking that for a meeting you change your standard Scout hand sign to the Okay Sign. This simple gesture is a positive sign to everyone around you. It shows you are aware of emotions and mental health issues, and are willing to talk about them. Sometimes seemingly very small things can mean a lot to people who are having a hard time.



This idea is part of scouting's larger contribution to promoting the whole health of young people and adult volunteers. The message is especially important this month, with 10th September being Suicide Awareness Day. The It's Okay to Talk sign shows us all that help is available and that talking to someone you trust is a good way to help promote positive mental health.

In this document, there are suggested ways to introduce the idea to your section. Also, please remember to be and considerate when raising these issues as they could bring up emotions for some people.

Yours in Scouting,



David Shalloo
Chief Commissioner (Youth Programme)

Scouts

The Scouters should work with the PLs on helping them understand what the 'It's OK to Talk' sign means. Then, the PLs should show it to their Patrol and explore the ideas involved. Here are some points you could raise:

- The 'It's OK to Talk' is about promoting positive mental health. This means that our feelings and thoughts are an important part of our health.
- We all have feelings and emotions, sometimes we feel good other times sad, some times angry, and other times calm.
- When you are feeling down, like when you are sad or lonely, it's a good idea to talk to someone you trust. This can be a friend or a family member, or perhaps a teacher or someone in Scouts.
- By making the the 'It's OK to Talk' sign when are telling everyone around us that it is a good idea to talk about mental health, and that you can talk to me if you want.

Superfriend

Get a large piece of paper, or stick several together. Trace the outline of a scout on to the paper. Write down the characteristics of a good friend on parts of the scout, like being there to help could go on the hand, or always there to listen by the ears. Afterwards, have each patrol share their 'Superfriends' with the troop.

Deserted Island

A teambuilding game that helps Scouts share a little about themselves. Make a series of small 'islands' using tape or sisal. Then, present with Scouts with this scenario. The situation is dire! Your patrol is about to become shipwrecked on a deserted island! Each scout is allowed to bring one object with them — something that represents them or something that they enjoy. Each scout, in turn, should describe their object and why they are bringing it. Encourage the scouts to be creative.