

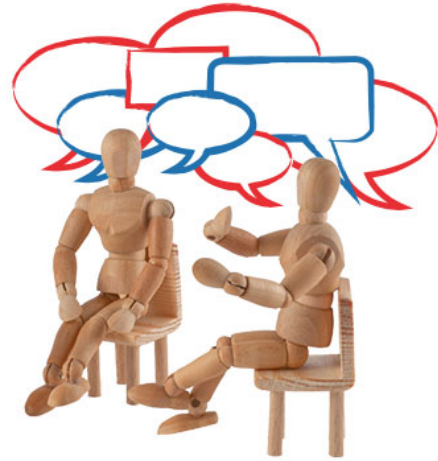
Module 11: Opening Up to Others

Objectives

This module aims to help you:

- Express your feelings

Talking to other people about your thoughts and feelings can be a daunting process. However it is a skill and much like any skill (tying your shoelace, driving a car) it is something that can be learnt and gets easier with practice.



Starting Point

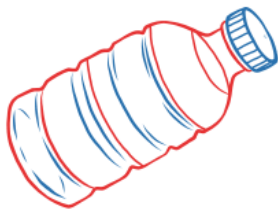
Identify your confidence with the following skills (1 = I find it impossible; 2 = I find it hard; 3 = I am really confident).

I have a clear and detailed understanding of how to talk to people about how I feel.	1	2	3
I can share when I feel positive emotions e.g. happy, excited	1	2	3
I can share when I feel negative emotions e.g. anger, sadness, loneliness	1	2	3

If you have scored yourself 1 or 2 then this module will be particularly relevant for you. Even if you are very confident we would encourage you to check that you use all of the skills described, as everyone can improve their communication.

Why talk about my feelings?

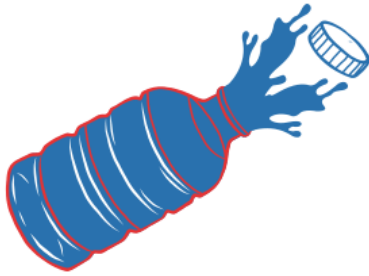
Some people don't see the benefits of talking about feelings. Let's look at what happens if you don't. Imagine you are carrying around a bottle.



In this bottle you put all your negative feelings.



Over years you fill it up until it becomes too full and explodes!

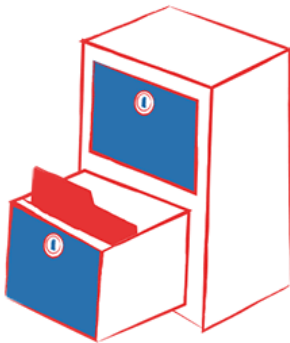


The negative feelings come out, often in an unhealthy way, either by strong emotions (commonly an angry outburst) or through harmful behaviours that help distract from the emotions such as alcohol, drugs, gambling or sex.

Think about your situation – is this relevant for you, does it help explain your online behaviour?

So how does talking help?

Imagine instead of filling your bottle you have a filing cabinet.



Instead of pushing all your feelings inside, you have a system to look at your feelings, think about them, discuss them and file them away, knowing where they are and how to access them at another time if you need to. Does that sound more manageable?

Ever heard the saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved'? Often people find that an important part of dealing with (or filing) feelings is to share them with someone you can trust. This can be helpful to allow you reflect on how you feel and make your emotions feel more manageable.

An added advantage is that by sharing how you feel with someone this helps them feel closer to you and creates intimacy in your relationship.

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Who do I talk to?

If you don't have a partner, family member or friend to talk to then there are organisations who can help. Stop It Now! offers free confidential advice and support for people who are concerned about their sexual thoughts, feelings or behaviours. You can also get counselling via your GP or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

How do I talk about my feelings?

Some emotions are more difficult to express than others. Negative ones can often be harder to express but there are ways to make it easier.

Setting the scene - Location is important. You want somewhere that offers privacy; you want to have the time to discuss the situation and how you feel, possibly on neutral territory. For example you might choose a quiet corner of a café on an afternoon when you have plenty of time.

Self-talk – Use positive self-talk to help yourself calm down and build your confidence to talk about your feelings. If you are unsure what positive self-talk is then read the [self-talk section](#).



It can be really helpful to plan out what you want to say to someone and how you are going to say it. You don't want to plan out the whole conversation (as you need to be able to respond to what the other person says) but it can be helpful to have an opening line.



What if they are causing the problem?

If your feelings stem from the other person's behaviour then it is important to approach the discussion in a non-confrontational way. Using the following structure can be helpful:

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION – "when we don't spend time together"

EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS – "I feel lonely"

SPECIFY WHAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN – "I would like us to have at least one evening a week together"

STATE THE OUTCOME – "that way we can have quality time together"

It is important to state how you feel using 'I' statements, as no one can disagree with how you feel and it doesn't sound like you are blaming the other person. (Try practising in your head 'you make me feel lonely' versus 'I feel lonely' and see how it sounds to you.)

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Reflection

As with the Introduction to this module, identify your confidence with the following skills (1 = I find it impossible; 2 = I find it hard; 3 = I am really confident).

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Now, consider the following questions:

- Have any of your responses changed from 1 to 2 or 2 to 3 from since the start of this module?
- In what ways might your confidence have changed?
- Which part of the module has had the greatest impact on your understanding? Why?
- Has anything from this module prompted or encouraged you to take action around your behaviour? If so, what? How do you plan to act on it?
- Has this module raised any further questions for you or made you want to explore any ideas further? What steps do you plan to take to seek out this information?

If you want to discuss anything covered in this module, have struggled with working through the self-help material or just want the opportunity to work through the self-help site with a practitioner to guide you then please [call the Stop It Now! Helpline](#) for confidential support from our trained staff.

