

TFK Teachers

A SUPPLEMENT TO TIME FOR KIDS

FREE
Resources and
Student Activities
INSIDE!

SparkTop and TIME FOR KIDS present these informative, fun and free resources designed to help kids learn **when** and **how** to ask for help—essential life skills for every student, especially one with learning difficulties.

Get Help Now!

Asking for help is crucial to a child's success in school and life. It also benefits you by making your job as an educator more effective.

Support your students when they need it most. Read this guide to learn more.

greatschools™
The Parent's Guide to K-12 Success

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Schwab Learning

 **SPARKTOP.ORG™**
WHERE NO TWO BRAINS SPARK ALIKE!

 **SPARKTOP.ORG™**
Teacher Resource Center

About SparkTop

SparkTop is dedicated to helping kids with learning difficulties—including learning disabilities (LD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)—be successful in school and life. The nonprofit website develops and delivers resources that provide kids, and educators, with practical information, emotional support and trustworthy guidance.

SparkTop.org™ helps 8- to 12-year-old kids with learning difficulties

- Get tips on homework, school, friends and more.
- Showcase their creativity and be recognized for their strengths.
- Safely connect with other kids and participate in monitored discussions.

SparkTop Teacher Resource Center (SparkTop.org/teacher) provides teachers with

- Free and fun classroom activities.
- Innovative ways to use SparkTop in the classroom.
- Information about SparkTop.
- Valuable articles and resources on LD and AD/HD.



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Dear Educator,

We know that you are an important and influential person in the lives of your students who struggle to learn. We also realize it's not easy knowing when students need help. We created the Get Help Now! Teacher's Guide to help students be proactive when they have a problem and to foster communication and support in your classroom.

This guide also introduces you to the many resources available on SparkTop.org. We hope you'll share these with your students and their parents.

Thank you for helping kids with learning difficulties be successful in school and life!

Sincerely,

Your friends at SparkTop

Getting Help Is Hard to Do!

Why do many kids have trouble getting help?

Speaking up and asking for help is difficult for many students. In an informal poll on SchwabLearning.org, over 50 percent of parents said it was difficult for their child to seek help outside the family. Here are some reasons why.

- Lack of awareness that they need help
- Fear of embarrassment or ridicule
- Fear of appearing stupid or weak
- Belief that something must be wrong with them
- Desire to solve things on their own
- Lack of trust

Kids think they can handle it themselves.

—Girl, age 13



Why is getting help an important skill?

Research shows that a key predictor of success and happiness in adults with learning disabilities is the ability to seek support from outside sources. This ability can be nurtured in childhood. Here are possible benefits in doing so.

- Kids gain self-confidence when they successfully work with others to solve a problem.
- Kids feel more in control and less helpless.
- Kids practice communication skills when they must explain problems in ways that others can understand.
- Teachers learn if their classroom instruction is confusing or needs modification.

What are signs that a student needs help?

- Nervousness
- Confusion or frustration
- Sadness or depression
- Boredom, apathy or lack of desire to do work
- Frequent absence from class
- Change in relationships with friends, family, classmates, etc.
- Physical problems
- People advising the student to seek help

This is not a complete list and is not intended for use as a diagnostic tool.



SparkTop: A Place Where Kids Get Help

SparkTop is a **safe, secure, and FREE** website that helps 8- to 12-year-old children with learning difficulties get practical and emotional support, express their creativity and participate in a caring online community. Here's a sampling of what can be found at SparkTop.org.

- Helpful tips about school, studying, friends and more
- Safe ways to connect with other kids
- Acknowledgement of what kids do well
- Challenging games for kids to have fun

Offering support and building self-esteem is crucial to a child's success in school and at home. SparkTop helps parents and teachers have a positive impact on the lives of kids who learn differently.

Several tips on pages 3 and 5 were adapted from Education World's article "Encouraging Class Participation" by Dr. Kenneth Shore. Read the complete article at educationworld.com/a_curr/shore/shore056.shtml.



Helping Kids Help Themselves

Learning specific strategies for getting help is important for all students, who may not have learned these basic skills in the past. Here are tips kids can use to speak up and get the help they need.

Tips on Getting Help

- 1 WATCH FOR SIGNS:** Recognize signs of when you need to get help (see page 3).
- 2 THINK WHO:** Who will you ask for help? It could be your parents, teachers, tutors, counselors, older students, friends, relatives or neighbors. Those are just a few options.
- 3 THINK WHAT:** What will you say? If you're nervous about asking, practice with a buddy to get an idea of what you want to say and what might happen. Consider asking your friend to go with you for moral support.
- 4 THINK HOW:** How will you ask for help? You could ask in person, send an e-mail, write a note or call on the phone.
- 5 THINK WHEN:** When will you ask for help? You may need to make an appointment ahead of time or pick a day when that person is not distracted or busy.
- 6 DON'T GIVE UP!:** If your situation doesn't improve, ask someone else. Keep asking until you get the help you need.

It's hard because kids are afraid their parents or teachers will embarrass them.

—Girl, age 11



And Remember...

- Asking for help doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. **Everyone** can benefit from getting help.
- Ask for help as soon as possible, especially if you have a learning difficulty. Don't wait for someone to offer it.
- Every problem has a solution—sometimes several! Find the solution that works for YOU.

The SparkTop Teacher Resource Center (TRC): A Place Where Teachers Get Help

The SparkTop TRC offers ways to bring SparkTop to your classroom and helps teachers be a key source of support for students with learning difficulties.

This **FREE** website offers educators

- Student worksheets and activities designed to help improve self-esteem
- Articles and resources on LD and AD/HD
- Sweepstakes and giveaways for your classroom
- Information about SparkTop and why it was created

Visit SparkTop.org/teacher soon and share this valuable resource with your colleagues.

Something I wish I had known sooner is that teachers are there to help you. They aren't just there to teach a class.

—Adult with LD



A Supportive Environment for ALL



Kids need not only specific problem-solving skills but also a positive classroom atmosphere where they can use those skills with confidence. This is especially critical for kids with learning difficulties. Here are ways to make your classroom a supportive learning environment for all.

Nurture Respect, Understanding and Hope

- Discuss how **everyone** has problems from time to time. No one is perfect!
- Create a classroom atmosphere where all students feel respected and are encouraged to speak up. Openly discuss how accepting help is not a sign of weakness or stupidity.
- Praise positive problem-solving behavior as often as possible. Let students know you're proud of their efforts to seek (and give) help, no matter how small.
- Be a role model. Discuss times when you yourself sought help from others and how that benefited you. Discuss what might have happened had you not sought help.
- Make yourself available to your students. Listen well and take their concerns seriously. They'll begin to trust you and look to you as a source of guidance and support.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences, which may make it harder for some students to seek help outside the family.
- Instill a sense of hope. Students feel better when they sense that a solution to their problem is possible. Help put their problem in perspective. Reassure them that things will get better!

Thank you so much for talking to me. I feel much better now.

—Boy, age 13



Let Students Practice Solving Problems

- Provide ample opportunities for kids to observe **and** practice problem-solving skills through role-playing, group projects, storytelling, etc.
- Encourage students to work together and help one another in a variety of situations.
- Teach students specific problem-solving skills (see page 4 of this guide).
- Allow kids who have received help to **give** help in return.

Put a box in the classroom where kids can put their questions. Read and answer the question to the class because someone else may have the same problem. If you don't put your name on it, you won't be embarrassed.

—Boy, age 10

Monitor and Check In with Students

- Monitor class participation and check in with any students whose behavior changes.
- Ask students directly if they need help. Don't assume they will approach you first.
- Let students know that your job as an educator is to help them. But you can't do it alone. They need to help you help them.



Reproducible Information

The following worksheets are designed to enhance students' awareness of how to get help. We strongly encourage students to visit SparkTop.org after completing them.

Please send home a copy of the "Dear Parent" letter with each student. It informs parents about this positive classroom program and provides them with helpful tips and activities for fostering communication and support with their children at home.

Visit the **SparkTop Teacher Resource Center** at SparkTop.org/teacher for more worksheets and activities.

Getting Help

Name: _____

Having a problem can make you nervous, sad or even angry. You don't need to feel that way. Take the first step and ask for help. It may be hard to do, but you'll feel a lot better!



Brush up on how to ask for help by circling the answers to the questions below.

- 1 Who can benefit from asking for help?**
 - A. No one
 - B. Everyone
 - C. Only people with learning difficulties
- 2 What's a sign that you might need help?**
 - A. You feel nervous or confused.
 - B. People say you need help.
 - C. Both A and B
- 3 What's the first step in getting help?**
 - A. Recognizing you need help
 - B. Not doing anything
 - C. Worrying about your problem
- 4 What can make asking for help less scary?**
 - A. Avoiding the problem
 - B. Closing your eyes when you ask
 - C. Asking a friend to go with you
- 5 What can make asking for help less stressful?**
 - A. Thinking about it constantly
 - B. Practicing what you're going to say with a friend, parent or even your dog
 - C. Holding your breath
- 6 Who can you go to for help?**
 - A. Parents, teachers, teen mentors
 - B. Counselors, relatives, family friends
 - C. Both A and B
- 7 What are good ways to ask for help?**
 - A. Schedule a face-to-face meeting, write a letter or send an e-mail.
 - B. Wait for someone to offer help.
 - C. Tell a friend you need help, but make them promise not to tell anyone!
- 8 Which statement is true?**
 - A. Successful people never need help.
 - B. Successful people ask for help when they need it.
 - C. Successful people are helpless.

Get help now with school, studying and more!
Go to [SparkTop.org!](https://www.sparktop.org)



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Support Squad*

Name: _____

Knowing who can help you with a problem is like having your very own Support Squad. It's important to think of who those people are **BEFORE** a problem occurs!

Use this page to identify one person who can help you with each problem. Then write down why that person can help.



PROBLEM

WHO CAN HELP...AND WHY?

1 Don't understand homework

Who: _____

Why? _____

2 Failed a test

Who: _____

Why? _____

3 Fighting with my best friend

Who: _____

Why? _____

4 Didn't make the team

Who: _____

Why? _____

5 Parents don't understand me

Who: _____

Why? _____

6 Bully at school

Who: _____

Why? _____

7 Mean sister or brother

Who: _____

Why? _____

8 Not feeling well

Who: _____

Why? _____

**Now when a problem occurs, you'll know who to turn to.
Don't forget to turn to SparkTop—your online Support Squad.
Visit SparkTop.org for tips on school, studying, friends and more!**



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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Everyone needs help from time to time. Recognizing when one needs help and knowing how to get it are important skills. Research reveals these skills contribute to a child's success in life. Together, families and schools can create an environment where children feel comfortable communicating their problems. This year, our class is visiting a SAFE and FREE website called SparkTop.org that

- Helps kids talk about their problems and get advice.
- Provides strategies for homework, studying and more.
- Delivers accurate information about how kids learn.
- Offers games and activities for kids to find relief and have fun.

We hope you'll visit SparkTop.org with your child soon. Through collaboration, schools and families can work together to support kids when they need it most.

Sincerely,

SparkTop & The Editors of TIME For Kids

Be a Source of Support

It's important to make sure your child is not ashamed or embarrassed to seek help. Some questions to ask yourself are

- Does my child know when he needs help?
- Does she know where and how to get help?
- Does he have a plan in place for when problems arise?

For more information, download one of SchwabLearning.org's free E-ssential Guides for parents at schwablearning.org/resources.aspx?g=7&s=1.

Communicate...



and Have Fun!

Helping your child develop problem-solving skills will take time and effort—but it can also be fun! Here are ways to encourage communication and dialogue with your child.

ACTION PICTURES: Discuss stories from newspapers, movies, books or your imagination about people who needed help from others. How did they get help? Did it solve their problems? Talk about the value of getting help.

BEND AN EAR (OR TWO): With your child, think of difficult situations, such as failing a test, fighting with a friend, family problems, or not making a sports team. For each situation, ask your child to name two or three people she might go to for help. Ask your child why she chose those people. Suggest other people or resources she could consider.

ROLE-PLAY: Asking for help can be scary and takes practice. To help your child, think of tricky situations (or use the ones listed in the activity above). Have your child pretend to be the person who needs help, while you play the part of the person who is helping, such as a teacher, coach or friend. Switch roles so your child can see if you handle the situation differently.



Adapted from SchwabLearning.org's *Expert Answers Guide: Success Attributes of Kids with Learning Disabilities* by Dr. Marshall Raskind and the Frostig Center's *Life Success for Children with Learning Disabilities—A Parent Guide*. Read the complete guides at schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=876 and schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=732.