

How can I deal with
situations in which
my parents seem
sad, worried,
or angry?



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Going through difficult times

Your family have gone through very difficult situations to get here and might still face challenges.

Going through hardship for a long time can change the way people feel and behave.

Some feel sad, worried and at times angry. They might no longer act the way they used to.



**Maybe you have noticed
this in yourself too.**

Most parents try to stay strong for their children. Sometimes they even pretend that everything is fine, even when it is not and you can feel it.

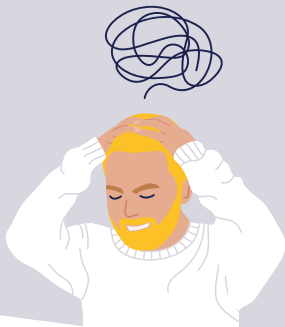
Even though your parents are grownups, they might not manage to handle all their worries, stress and anger properly by themselves.

They may feel overwhelmed by too many problems.



Signs that your parent(s) or caretaker might need help

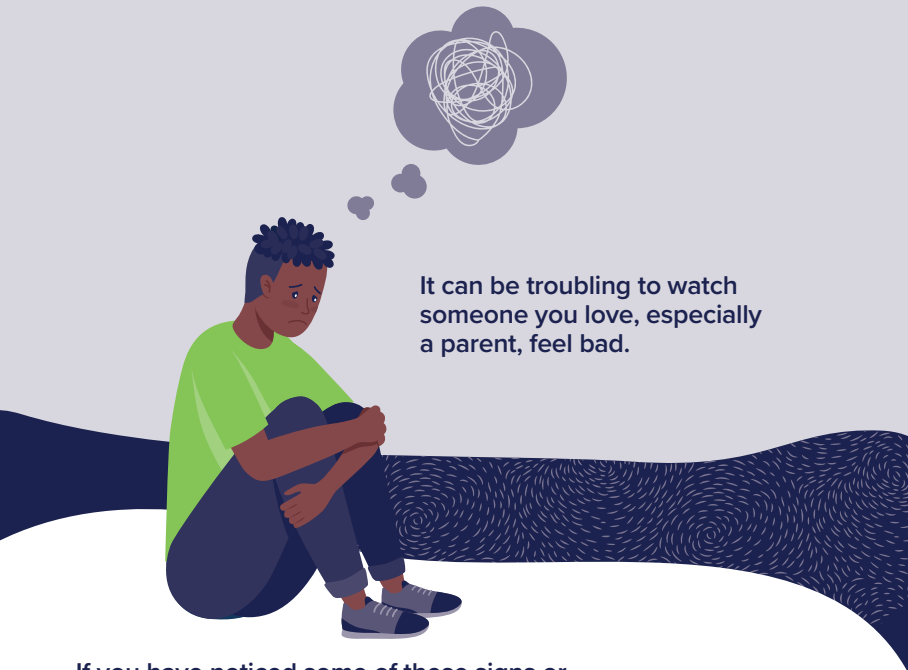
- They appear more worried or angrier than usual.
- They are easily irritated, argue and scream at you and others.
- They have stopped talking to people and seeing friends.
- They pretend that everything is fine but you see them worrying when they think nobody notices.
- They stay in their room or in bed most of the time, don't eat, cry, no longer cook, tidy up or wash themselves.
- They drink alcohol or smoke too much.
- They complain about headaches, back pain or other sickness and take too many medicines.
- They no longer care for or comfort their children when they are hurt.
- They ignore their children and do not listen when they try to talk to them.
- They become aggressive towards other family members or even you.



Remember

If your parent(s) or caretaker shows any of these signs, this is not your fault!





It can be troubling to watch someone you love, especially a parent, feel bad.

If you have noticed some of these signs or a change in your parent's behaviour and you are worried that something is wrong with them or they are getting worse, **here is some information to support you.**

Protect yourself

When a parent gets very angry, starts calling you names or even hits you, if they ask you to do things such as going out to bring money home, or other things that make you uncomfortable, **you need to make sure that you are safe.**



Remember

It is **never** OK when a parent is violent. If this happens, it is very important that you ask for help from someone you trust, for example a professional who works where you live, another adult or a good friend.

The place where you live could offer services to protect and advise you. Other services could be reached via phone through a hotline, or online through official webpages that provide support via chat.



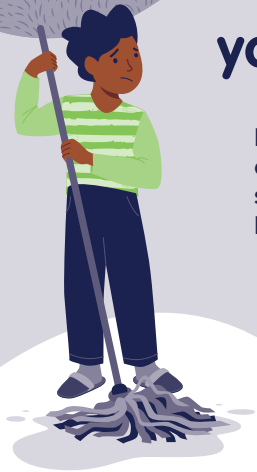
You are the child and your parent is the adult

Maybe your parent expects you to take care of them because they feel depressed and sad. It might seem as if you and your parent have switched roles.

You cook, clean, take care of your younger siblings and of your parent, while they feel unable to do anything.

For a short while, it is honourable to help with **small tasks**. But if this goes on for a long time **and you don't feel good about it**, you will need to ask for help.

A child should not take up the role of the parent. You are still a child and it is your right to feel safe and protected!



Try to observe

When you see that your parent is always or periodically stressed, sad, worried or behaves in an unusual way, ask for help.

A professional can advise you and explain the possible causes to you.



Try to be open and share your feelings

Sometimes your parent might not realise that their behaviour has changed.

Try to tell them very respectfully that you are worried because you see a change in the way they behave and talk.

Try to be open and honest and share your feelings. Tell them that you fear that they are unwell.

This can help a parent understand that you care and that they should ask for support.



You have the right to receive attention

Maybe your parent is working a lot or is trying to sort out your new life here in Europe. As a result, it is possible that you spend a lot of time by yourself. This can feel scary and lonely.

When you feel this way, try to talk to your parent or to a person you trust. It is okay to wish that someone could help you with homework or with other things you feel you cannot do on your own.

Talking to your parent can make them realise that they should pay you more attention.



You can ask questions

If you feel safe and close enough with your parent(s), you can ask them: 'How are you?' or 'You seem worried, is everything okay?'

This might help them share with you some of their concerns, but also some of their hopes.

Talking about smaller problems can help to realise that things are not too bad. You are together, and things can get better.

If they struggle with bigger problems, your parent will have to talk to an adult and ask for advice.



You do not have to take it all on you

At times, parents can be so concerned by their worries that they do not stop talking about it. This can be very stressful for you as a child.

If this is the case, it is okay to respectfully say that you understand their worries but that they must seek help from someone else.




Show that you care

At times parents worry that they can't provide for their children the way they would like to. Maybe you realise that, and are helping your parents a lot. This is very nice and honourable of you.

Even if your parent is a grownup and maybe does not always show it, it can make them feel good when you help with daily tasks like tidying up your room or making your bed. A little help can make them feel less stressed.



When we are part of a family, we all need to help with some chores depending on our age, so that everyone feels good.

An illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a grey short-sleeved shirt and a long green skirt, hugging a child from behind. The child is wearing a green jacket and dark pants. They are standing on a white, textured ground. In the background, there is a stylized grey tree and a grey bush.

Depending on your relationship with your parents and the circumstances, a smile or hug can help them to feel better.

Giving your parent some space from time to time and leaving them alone for a bit, can show that you care.

Silence, peace and quiet can work wonders.

Ask for help

If some of the situations presented here seem familiar to you, know that **you are not alone**.

Reach out to a person you trust who works where you live, such as a social worker or a nurse, or a teacher at school and tell them what is bothering you.

They can guide you on the next steps and will try to support you and your parent.



Remember

Social workers, nurses or other officers will try to make sure that what is discussed between you and them is not shared with anyone else, including your parent, without your approval. The only exception is if you or your parent is in immediate danger.

Even though you have overcome many challenges in your life already, asking for help when you need to is very smart.



You have the right to feel safe and protected, and if this is not the case, don't shy away from asking for help.

Having someone to support you and your parent can be exactly what you both need to feel better again.

