

Seeking Help in High-Reliability Professions

Addressing the belief that needing support is incompatible with competence, strength, or service.

Why help-seeking can be difficult

Service cultures may prize control, reliability, toughness, and self-sufficiency. Concerns about confidentiality, career impact, peer judgment, or being taken off duty can also delay support.

A different frame

Early support can be understood as performance maintenance, risk reduction, relationship protection, and responsible self-monitoring. Waiting until functioning collapses usually creates fewer choices, not more.

Practical steps

- Start with a confidential peer-support or licensed professional resource.
- Ask directly about confidentiality and its limits.
- Choose a clinician who understands trauma and service culture when possible.
- Describe functional changes - sleep, anger, drinking, avoidance, concentration - even if you are unsure what diagnosis applies.
- Bring a trusted person if making the first contact alone feels like too much.

Try this reflection

If a respected colleague had your exact symptoms, what would you advise them to do?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.