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How was your day?

Conversation starters

As much as we care about our loved ones, sometimes knowing how to start good discussions with the teens or young adults in your life can be tough. Make it easier with these conversation starters. Scroll through the following cards to find a question that can inspire interesting conversations and help move you both beyond one-word answers.





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to start

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**When was the last
time you felt 🙄?**

We all feel sad sometimes. But if someone you love often feels sad, hopeless or irritable, it could be a sign of depression. Finding less joy in activities and experiencing changes in sleep and eating patterns can be signs too.¹

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anxiety and depression in children. cdc.gov/childrensmetalhealth/depression.html. Last reviewed March 22, 2021. Accessed October 8, 2021.





What do you do when you can't sleep at night?



To be healthy and rested, it's important to get enough sleep. Your school-age kids and teens need about 9½ hours each night, and adults need 7–9 hours.¹ Teach your loved ones to keep their phone outside their bedroom and TV off to help them fall asleep.¹

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Brain basics: Understanding sleep. ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep#4. Last updated August 13, 2019. Accessed October 8, 2021.






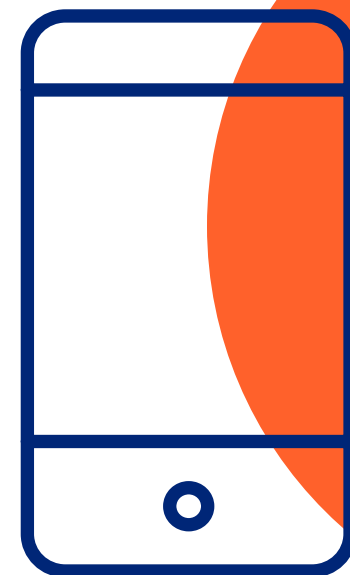
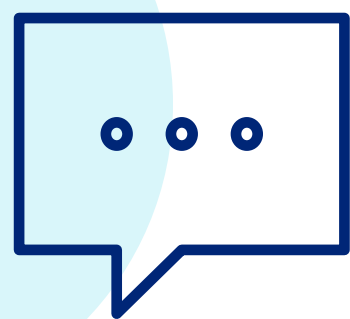
What's your favorite meal? And why?

Nutrition is important for people of all ages, including growing teens. If what your teen eats, and when, is starting to take over their thoughts – this could be a potential sign of an eating disorder.





What would you do if you couldn't use social for a week?



Social media can make some people feel anxious about whether others approve of them, overwhelmed by constant notifications and worried that they're missing out.¹ Frequent Instagram use for young women is also correlated with body dissatisfaction, as well as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.²

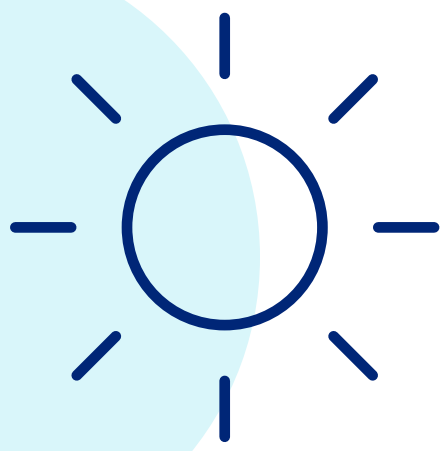
1. Steele RG, Hall JA, Christofferson JL. Conceptualizing digital stress in adolescents and young adults: Toward the development of an empirically based model. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev.* 2020 Mar;23(1):15-26. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31392451/.

2. Sherlock M, Wagstaff DL. Exploring the relationship between frequency of Instagram use, exposure to idealized images and psychological well-being in women. *Psychol Pop Media Cult.* 2019;8(4):482-490. psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-15210-001.






When was the last time you felt really happy?



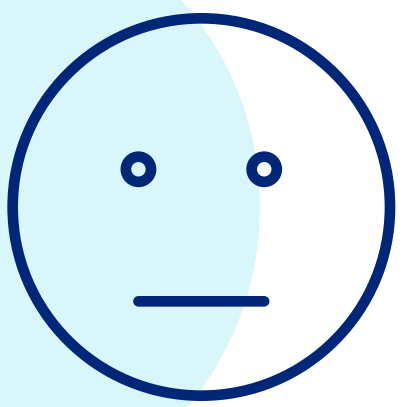
Feeling happy all the time isn't realistic. We all have bad days. But if the teen or young adult in your life has been feeling sad for a while, it could be a sign of depression. Other signs include feeling irritable, having trouble sleeping or sleeping too much, and feeling guilty or worthless.¹

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mental health conditions: Depression and anxiety. [cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/depression-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/depression-anxiety.html). Last reviewed February 15, 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.





Do you act differently at home than you do in other places?

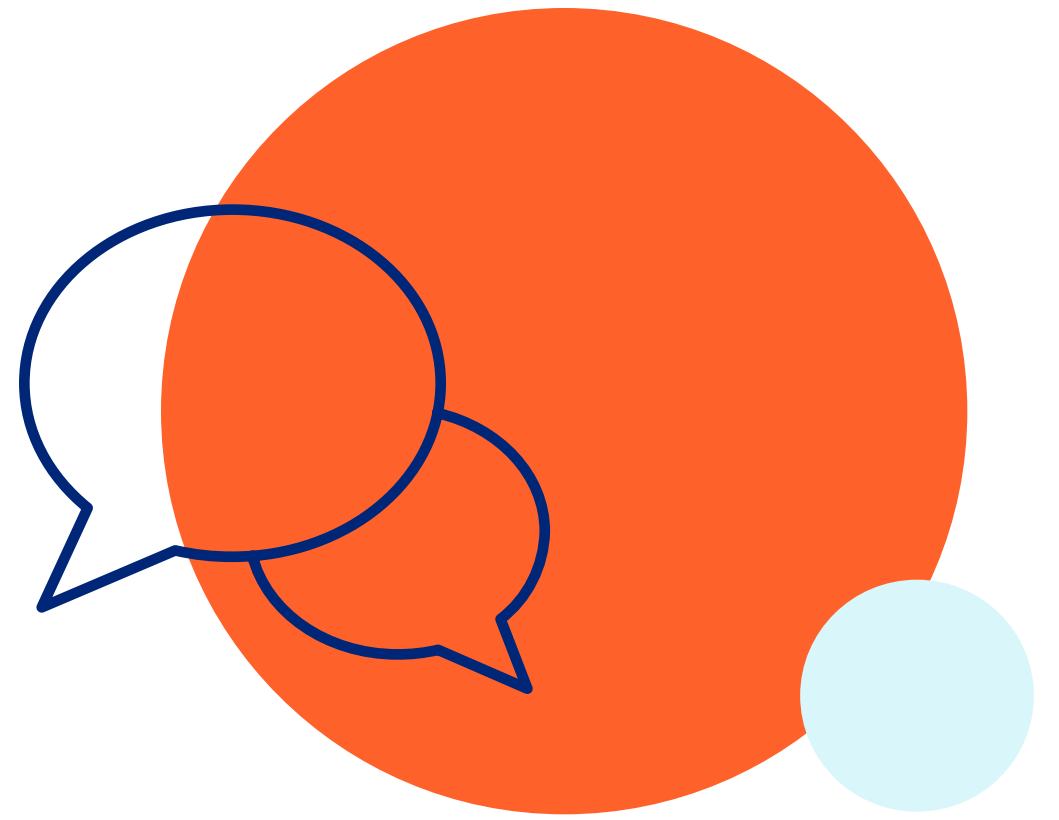


It's often appropriate to match how we act to the situation: like being more professional at work and more playful with friends. Yet it's also important to find our authentic selves – and be confident knowing that what makes each of us unique is what makes us great.






Describe a time when you felt nervous.



Whether it's presenting in front of the class or trying something new, we all get nervous sometimes. But being nervous often – in general or about particular situations – could be a sign of anxiety.¹

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anxiety and depression in children. [cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html](https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html). Last reviewed March 22, 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.





What are you most worried about right now?



Everyone worries sometimes, but constant worries could be a sign of anxiety.¹ If you think it could be affecting your loved one, reach out for help. Healthy eating, exercise, sleep and mindfulness can help as well.¹

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anxiety and depression in children. [cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html](https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html). Last reviewed March 22, 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.





What are you grateful for today?



Practicing gratitude can have physical and emotional benefits – including reducing stress.¹ Encourage your loved ones to ask themselves what they're grateful for each morning or before bed each night. After a week, see if it's made them feel any different.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Practicing gratitude works. [cdc.gov/howrightnow/gratitude/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/gratitude/index.html). Last reviewed April 16, 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.






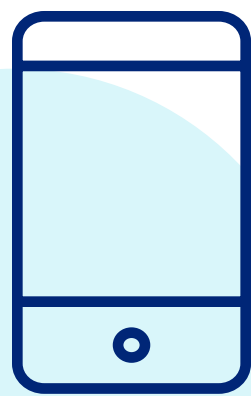
What's most valuable to you?

We all value different things. For some, relationships – and perhaps mementos of them – are essential. For others, what we purchase carries great weight. Ask your loved one to take a moment to reflect on what they really care about.





What's one habit you wish you could break?



Some habits, like practicing gratitude or getting regular exercise, are great. Others, such as smoking and vaping, aren't good for our health. If your teen or young adult has a habit they'd like to break, tell them to watch for what triggers them to do the activity and try to remove that cue. Look for ways to replace bad habits with good ones too.¹

1. American Heart Association. How to break bad habits and change behaviors. heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/how-to-break-bad-habits-and-change-behaviors. Last reviewed January 10, 2018. Accessed October 20, 2021.






What would you go viral for?

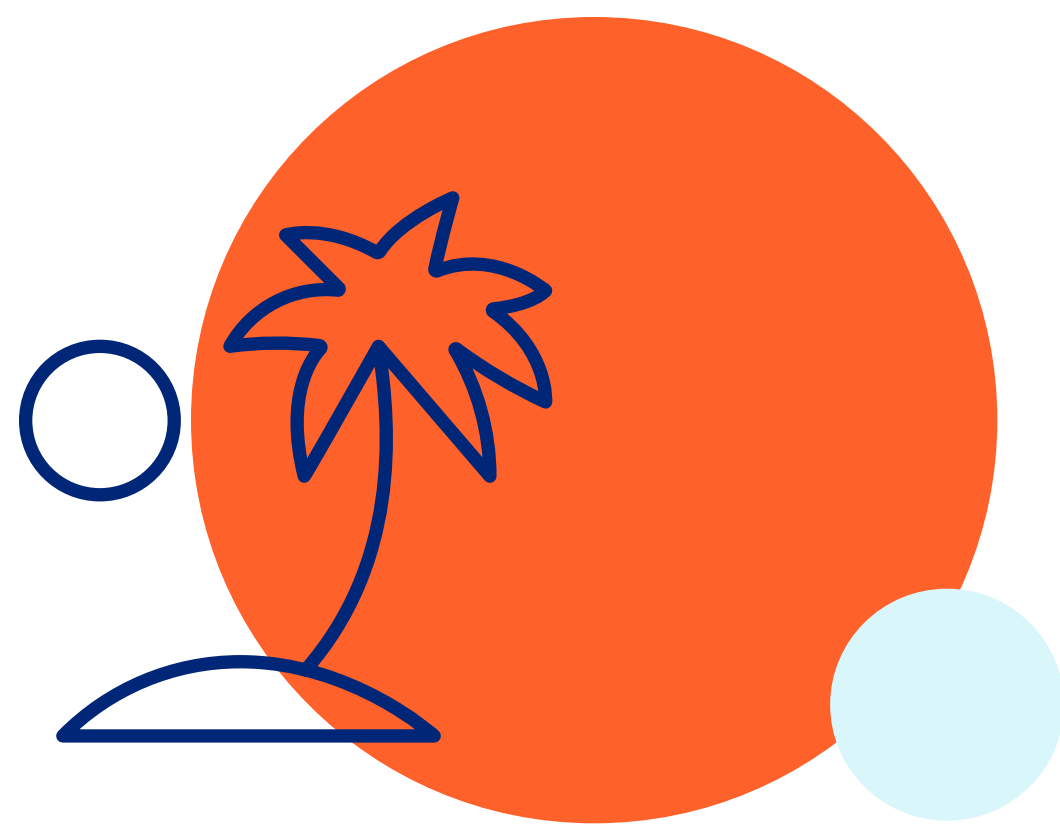
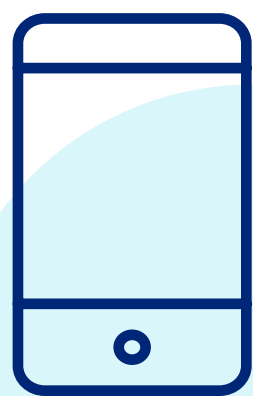
Peer pressure can be a good thing if friends are encouraging each other to keep their grades up or practice the activities they love. But when teens pressure others into risky behaviors like driving fast, drinking or skipping class, it can definitely be negative. Peer pressure can also cause young people to do things on social media that are risky.¹

1. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Peer pressure. [aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Peer-Pressure-104.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Peer-Pressure-104.aspx). Last updated March 2018. Accessed October 20, 2021.






You're stranded on an island. Who do you text first? Why?

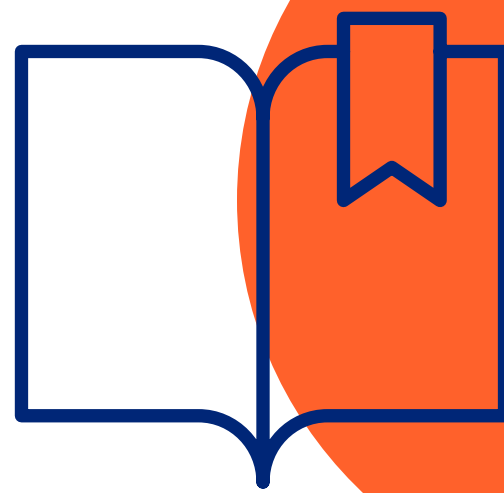
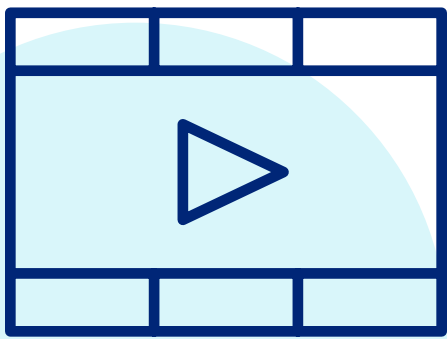


Whether it's a real emergency or everyday life, having a good support system is important. Make sure your loved ones know who they can trust, whether it be friends, family or professionals.






What was the last book, song or movie that made you feel something?



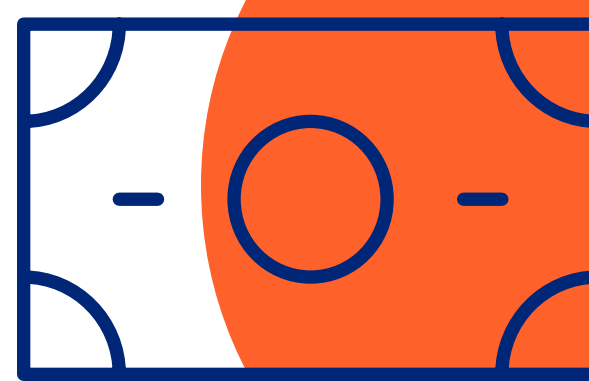
We all experience emotions: happy, sad, frustrated, angry and far more. Learning to understand and manage our emotions can have a big impact on our lives, including getting better grades and test scores in school.¹

1. American Psychological Association. Students do better in school when they can understand, manage emotions. [apa.org/news/press/releases/2019/12/students-manage-emotions](https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2019/12/students-manage-emotions). December 12, 2019. Accessed October 20, 2021.





If you found \$100, what would you do?



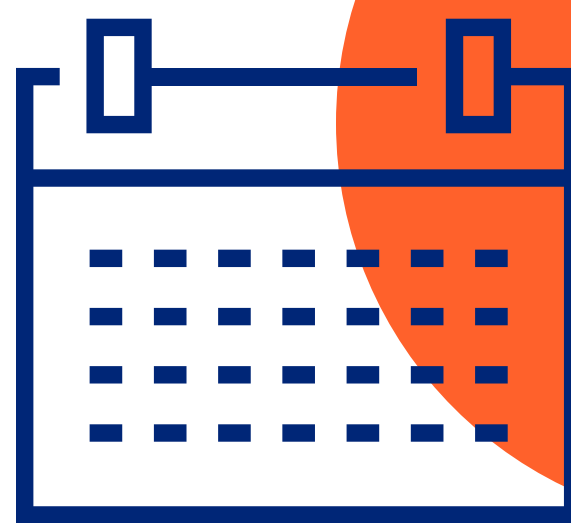
Knowing how to make smart financial decisions as adults often starts with financial education in the teenage years. Teach your teen about the importance of earning, budgeting and saving for short-term and long-term goals. Make sure they understand how loans and credit cards work too.¹

1. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Teenagers and young adults.
consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/money-as-you-grow/teen-young-adult/.
Accessed October 20, 2021.





**What is one thing
you hope to accomplish
in a few years?**

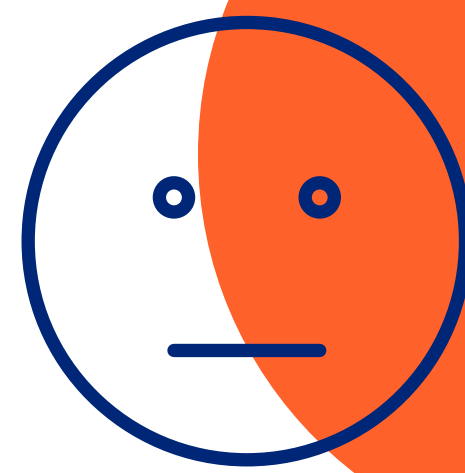


Most teens have heard the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” It can be intimidating and stressful if, like most teens, they aren’t sure. While it’s great to set goals and figure out how to achieve them, make sure you aren’t putting too much pressure on the young people in your life.





Which emoji describes your mood today?

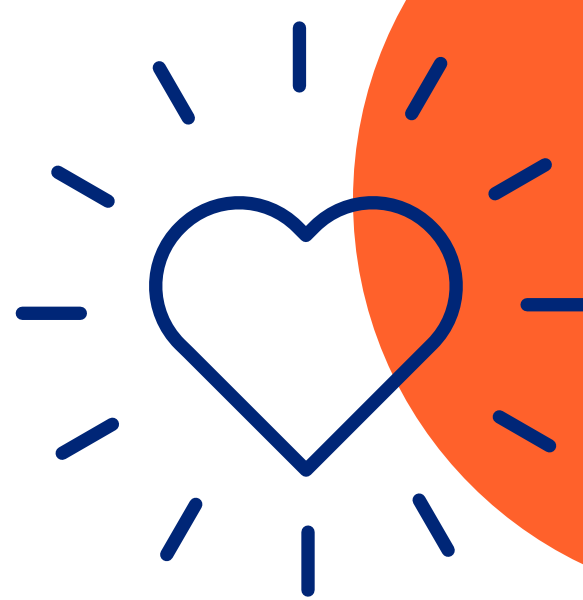


Think about the last time someone asked, “How are you doing?” There’s a good chance you said, “I’m fine.” But the truth is, we aren’t fine all the time. Sometimes we’re joyful, angry, sad, nervous, frustrated and so much more. Make sure your teen or young adult understands that it’s OK to admit how they’re really feeling – and reach out for help when they need it.





What can I do to support you better?



Being a parent is tough. So is being a teen. Be open with each other, and share what you honestly need to feel supported. It might be awkward at first, but it can model a strong relationship – something that will be important for years to come.





Why do you think you are a good friend?



Trust, honesty, mutual respect, good communication ...¹ What makes a good friend – and a good person to date? Make sure your loved ones understand how to choose relationships based on respect and healthy characteristics.

1. youth.gov. Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/characteristics.
Accessed October 20, 2021.






What's the most embarrassing thing I do?

Building a positive, open relationship with your teen is important. That includes being open to their differences of opinion and truly listening to and showing concern about their feelings.¹

1. National Institutes of Health. Parenting teens: Guiding kids through turbulent years. [newsinhealth.nih.gov/2019/06/parenting-teens](https://www.newshealth.nih.gov/2019/06/parenting-teens). June 2019. Accessed October 20, 2021.





What do you wish you were more motivated to do?



Even if we have big goals, getting motivated isn't always easy. Ask your loved ones what motivates them. Intrinsic motivation is when we do something because we find it personally rewarding. Extrinsic motivation is when we do something to get a reward or avoid punishment. Both types can help us reach our goals. Just be sure to focus on positive reasons.





What's your favorite thing about yourself? Least favorite?



Self-esteem is about valuing and respecting yourself.¹ Encourage your loved ones to think about all their good traits. It can help them have healthy self-esteem, and that can help them feel confident in school, work and other areas of their life.

1. American Psychological Association. Students experiencing low self-esteem or low perceptions of competence. [apa.org/ed/schools/primer/self-esteem](https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/primer/self-esteem). Accessed October 20, 2021.






What is something you are proud of?



Being proud of what we do and who we are is important. Encourage the young people in your life to take time to celebrate themselves and their achievements. It doesn't have to be big feats like running a marathon or getting into college. Everyday actions like being a good friend and helping others deserve pride too.





What's the hardest thing you have ever done?



Whether it's reaching an athletic goal, getting the courage to sing in front of an audience or dealing with the loss of a loved one, we all are faced with big challenges – some we choose and others we're forced to deal with. Encourage your loved ones to celebrate all that they've overcome and all that they're capable of doing in the future.





What are you most afraid of?

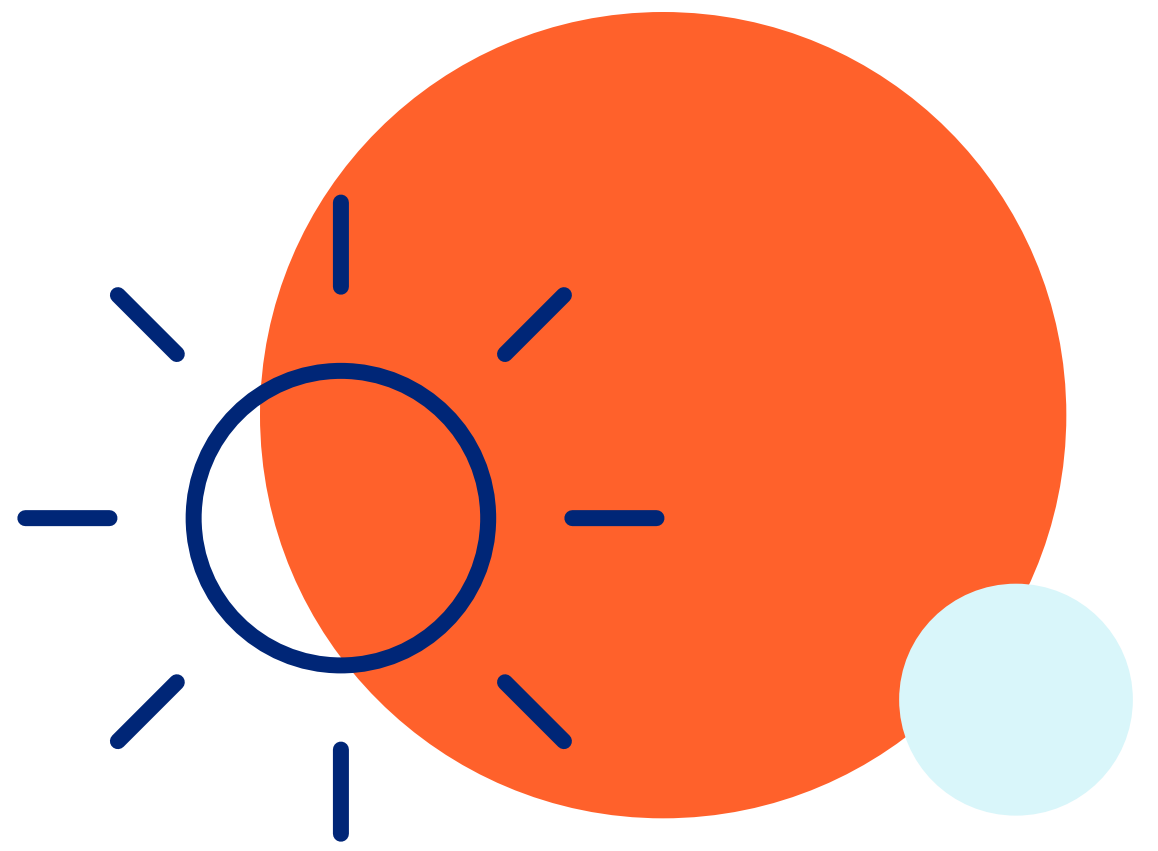
Snakes. Flying. Public speaking. Heights. Many of us are afraid of something. Fears aren't generally harmful, but if you see that your teen or young adult is really going out of their way to avoid something, it could be a phobia¹ – a very strong, ongoing fear. Most phobias can be treated, so encourage your loved one to reach out for help.²

1. American Psychiatric Association. What are anxiety disorders? [psychiatry.org/patients-families/anxiety-disorders/what-are-anxiety-disorders](https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/anxiety-disorders/what-are-anxiety-disorders). June 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.
2. HelpGuide. Phobias and irrational fears. [helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/phobias-and-irrational-fears.htm](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/phobias-and-irrational-fears.htm). Last updated October 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.





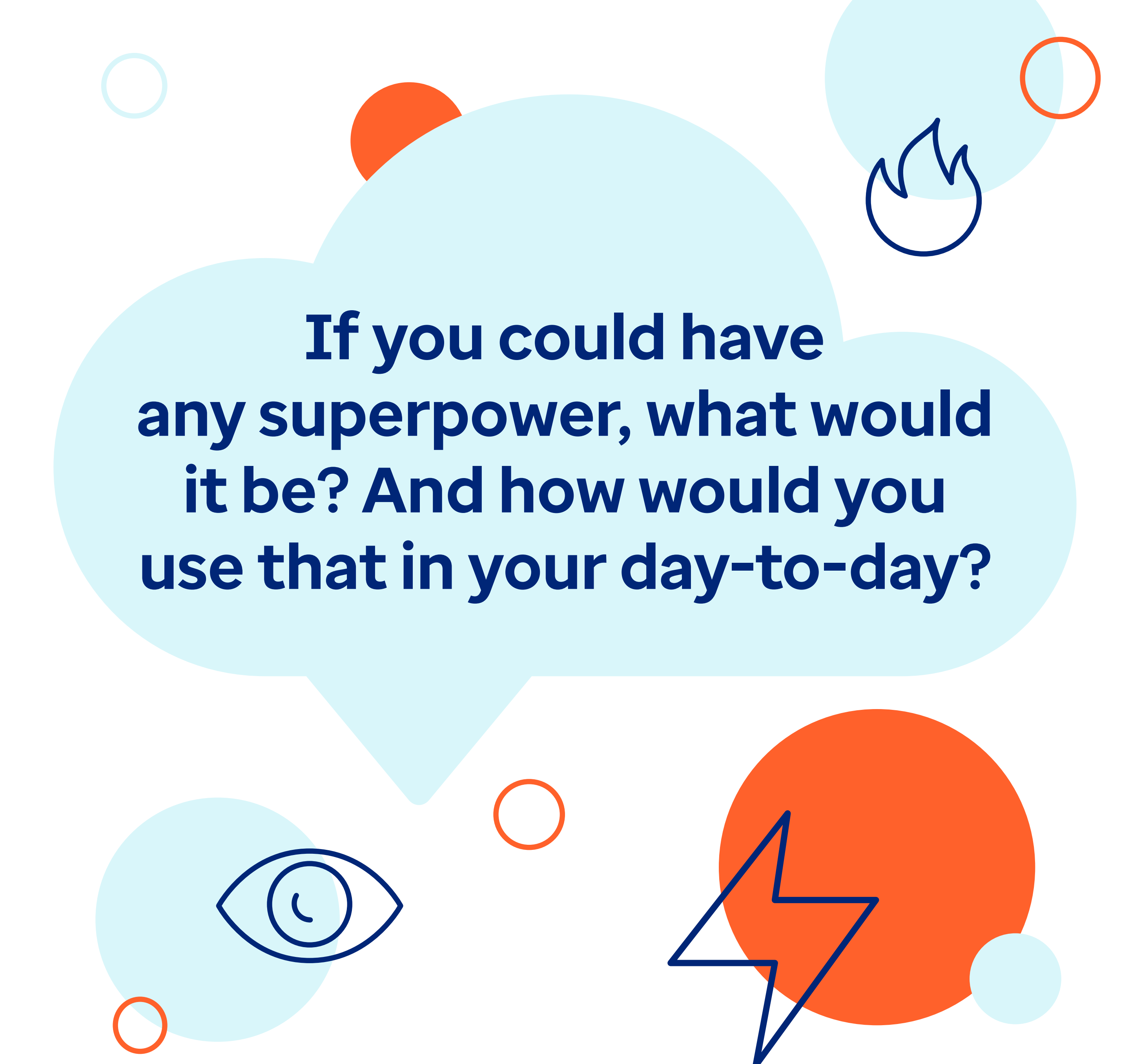
What was the last kind act you did or saw?



Being kind to others isn't just good for them. It can also boost our happiness, improve our well-being and benefit our physical health.¹ So encourage your child to look for ways to be kind every day. Small acts like holding the door or sharing a meal with someone – acts that include social contact – can have even more benefits than anonymous or online acts.¹

1. Abrams Z. The case for kindness. American Psychological Association. [apa.org/news/apa/kindness-mental-health](https://www.apa.org/news/apa/kindness-mental-health). August 2021. Accessed October 20, 2021.






If you could have any superpower, what would it be? And how would you use that in your day-to-day?

While we can't fly, become invisible or do some of the other amazing things in comic books and superhero movies, we do all have skills and traits that make us great in our own ways. Take a moment to teach your loved ones to appreciate their strengths – and those they see in others.





What would a perfect day be like, from the moment you wake up until you fall asleep?

A perfect day might be hard to achieve, but taking time for what we enjoy – and what’s important to our health – each day is important. Tell your family to start by making sure they get enough sleep. Then make sure they take some “me time” for reading, hanging out with a friend, playing music or doing something else they enjoy.

