

# SAFE SPACE RADIO



## ASKING FOR HELP AUDIO DISCUSSION GUIDE

[www.safespaceraudio.com](http://www.safespaceraudio.com)

## Using this Guide

The purpose of this discussion guide is to help facilitate discussion and reflection after listening to Safe Space Radio's *Asking for Help* episode, part of Season One of our miniseries, *Can We Talk*. This guide is divided into sections corresponding to the five stories in the episode. We hope this discussion guide will prove useful to people directly impacted by the issues addressed in *Asking for Help*, as well as friends, family members, caregivers, teachers, and healthcare providers for whom these conversations are part of daily life.

If you use Safe Space Radio in your home, classroom, group, or community, please let us know! We would love to hear from you at [info@safespaceaudio.com](mailto:info@safespaceaudio.com).

## About Safe Space Radio

**The mission of Safe Space Radio is to inspire courageous conversations, break down the barriers that divide us, and create compassionate communities.**

Founded in 2008, Safe Space Radio has broadcast more than 300 episodes and received numerous awards. The first season of our four-part miniseries, *Can We Talk?*, broadcast in May 2019 for Mental Health Awareness Month. Two long-form specials, "[Out-Takes](#)," on suicide prevention among LGBTQ teens, and "[Still Here](#)," on caregiving and dementia, both broadcast nationally in 2016. Our podcast is used in training programs for healthcare professionals, therapists, and teachers as they learn to address the needs of underserved populations.

## About Can We Talk?

*Can We Talk* is our miniseries for Mental Health Awareness in May. The first season broadcast in May 2019. Each episode explores a subject that is difficult to talk about through a combination of storytelling and expert guidance, offering listeners practical tools for navigating challenging conversations. This series is distributed in partnership with WBUR Boston.

The first season of *Can We Talk* includes four hour-long episodes:

- [Apologies](#)
- [Asking for Help](#)
- [Loneliness](#)
- [Talking to White Kids About Race & Racism](#)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT ASKING FOR HELP

What is the hardest thing about asking for help? Why do you think it takes courage to do? Why do you think we underestimate others' willingness to help us?

Is it important to be able to ask for help? Why or why not?

Describe a time you needed to ask for help. How did it feel? Did it affect your relationship with the person you asked? Were there any benefits? Were there any challenges?

Describe a time you were asked for help that you didn't want to give. Did it change your feelings about the relationship? Does it influence your feelings about asking for help when you need it?

Describe a time when you named a need out loud. Was it challenging? Did your feelings change about it change afterwards?

Asking for help might get easier with practice, but what about when we ask and get turned down? How do you ask for help after being rejected?

Describe a scene, conversation, or story from this episode that you found particularly moving, vivid, or disturbing. What about that scene was compelling to you?

If you could ask anyone in this episode a single question, what would you ask them?

What did you take away from this episode that you wish everyone knew? What would change in our community if everyone knew it?

## LEON ROBINSON SEGMENT

### **Content Reflection**

We usually think of hatred as a negative emotion, but Leon says that hate is the feeling that kept him alive for the four years he was homeless. How did you feel about his revelation? Why do you think Leon credits hate with keeping him alive?

Why do you think Leon felt he didn't deserve to get help, that he "condemned himself"? Do you think this is a common feeling?

What comes to mind when we hear the word "homeless"? Do you think most people in this country have an accurate idea of who is homeless and why? Do you think your ideas accurately represent homelessness in this country? Does it matter?

### **Personal Reflection**

Think about your own experiences of being most vulnerable. How have those experiences shaped your thoughts about asking for help, or helping others?

Have you ever been surprised by someone's reaction to your ask for help?

What does the word "pride" mean to you? How does pride relate to your own life? How do you think pride affects asking for help?

Leon says he didn't tell his parents he was homeless because "they don't need the stress of wondering if I'm going to live or die the next day." What is your own family's attitude about asking for help? Has it changed as you've gotten older?

## NORA BOUCHARD SEGMENT

### **Content Reflection**

In the episode, Nora says that people struggle to use the word “help.” Why do you think this word is difficult? Why do you think that using this word, actually makes it more likely that you will get help?

How did you feel about Nora’s advice for asking for help? Is there anything you would add? What are the benefits of asking for help?

### **Personal Reflection**

We live in a culture that emphasizes independence and individualism. How do you think society has affected your thinking about asking for help? How do you think your own community or family has influenced your thinking about asking for help?

How do you think self-care is related to asking for help?

### **For Clinical Providers**

How might you work with a patient who needed to ask for help?

## BOB CHILDS SEGMENT

### **Content Reflection**

As Bob listens to his parents tell him about where he was adopted from, he describes feeling like a “little tiny kid.” Why do you think he feels this way? What emotions do you imagine having in his place?

Bob describes how asking his parents for help—and eventually meeting his birth family—allowed him to grow into himself. Why do you think that this conversation helps him “hold back less and less”? Do you think asking for help might have a similar effect in other situations, too?

Bob says that asking for help is especially risky for sensitive people, who are “tuned into other people’s feelings.” Do you agree or disagree? Why would this be the case?

### **Personal Reflection**

Have you ever had to ask a difficult question of your parents, or make a difficult request? What were the challenges? How did it make you feel?

What makes you feel known by other people? What makes you feel seen?

## ALICE BARAKAGWIRA SEGMENT

### **Content Reflection**

What comes to mind when you think of asylum seekers and refugees? Based on Alice’s story, do you think this is an accurate picture? How do you think our culture teaches us to think of people seeking asylum?

Despite experiencing a high incidence of trauma and sexual violence, fewer than 1% of asylum seekers and refugees in this country receive mental health support. Why do you think this is?

Alice says that being an immigrant makes her invisible, that “your true identity is not visible anymore.” What defines our identity? Can we change what defines us?

### **Personal Reflection**

What is stigma? What does the word “stigma” mean to you?

Living with shame can make us want to hide, especially when that shame is connected with a traumatic experience. How has shame influenced you in the past? How does it influence your interactions and relationships with other people?

Do you think shame is always a part of asking for help? Why or why not?

Describe an experience with asking for help from a complete stranger. What did it feel like? What were the challenges? Did you receive the help you needed?

## LYNN OUELLETTE SEGMENT

### **Content Reflection**

What are common misconceptions about opioid misuse? What do you think it's important for people to understand about substance use disorders? Did anything surprise you about Lynn and Brendan's story?

How did Lynn navigate offering help to Brendan? How would you describe the approaches she describes? How did you feel as you listened to the story?

Lynn describes how some of her best conversations with Brendan took place over text message. How would you describe the difference between face-to-face conversation and writing-based communication like text or email? Why might text be easier for some conversations?

Why do you think Lynn felt that it was important to put the cause of Brendan's death in his obituary?

### **Personal Reflection**

In your own life, have you ever had to navigate offering help to someone who either doesn't want it or doesn't know how to ask for it? What did you do? How did you approach the situation?

Have you ever needed help that you didn't want to ask for, or didn't know how? What stopped you from asking? What might have helped you ask?

Did anything in Lynn and Brendan's story speak to or relate to an experience in your own life?

In the episode, Lynn describes feeling like her love was not enough to save Brendan. What do you think is the difference between love and help?

### **For Clinical Providers**

What are the risk factors that you most frequently see for opiate misuse? What do you think are some common reasons people misuse opioids?

What suggestions would you give to parents about opioid use and dependence? How might you work with a patient who is concerned about a child's use of opioids?

Do you experience pressure to work for an abstinence-only approach to treating opioid use disorders? How do you understand the stigma that surrounds Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)? Do you sense it among your colleagues, the patient, families?

What have you learned to do to reduce this stigma, so that more people can access the treatment?

## BRYAN FUNK SEGMENT

### **Personal Reflection**

Have you ever had to ask for help in an emergency situation?

How do you think the internet has changed our relationships? How has it changed how we ask for help? What are the challenges or benefits of sites like GoFundMe?

Asking for help can make us confront our own vulnerability. What are the benefits of feeling vulnerable? What are the challenges?

Bryan says that “vulnerability breeds vulnerability.” Have you ever experienced this effect, of your own vulnerability inviting someone else to be vulnerable in your own life?

Why do you think Bryan was so surprised by people’s responses to his GoFundMe campaign?

### **For Clinical Providers**

Bryan talks about feeling anxious in crowded spaces after his health scare. How might you approach working with a patient around their own mortality and vulnerability?