

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

How to Start Reaching Out When It Feels Like You are Drowning

Do you ever feel like you're drowning emotionally, but then when someone asks how you're doing, you quickly reply, "I'm fine", without a second thought? For many of us, *I'm fine* has become a reflex – a response we give regardless of how we might be feeling.

This feeling of emotional drowning is often subtle, to the point where no one else notices. This might be because what we're presenting outwardly does not match what's going on inside of us. We may still go to work, show up for our kids, respond to texts, and even laugh at the right moments, as if we really were fine. But inside there may be a constant sense of being overwhelmed, disconnected, or numb. We might feel chronically tired, irritable, or restless.

When no one knows how much we're struggling, we can start to believe that no one could understand. We may even go through our day hoping someone will notice and reach out. But then when someone finally asks, we fall right back into autopilot and say, *I'm fine*.

And often this happens for any number of reasons:

- We don't really take the time to check in with ourselves for an honest reflection
- We worry that our needs are a burden to others
- We believe that everyone expects us to push through
- We don't know what other options exist besides "just pushing through"

So how do you stay afloat in these moments and reach out for help?

Start with yourself. An important first step is being honest with yourself. Before sharing the truth with others, we have to be willing to acknowledge it ourselves. That might mean pausing when someone asks how you're doing or finding time to reflect after you realize you told someone you were "fine".

Open up gradually. You don't have to jump from *I'm fine* to a full emotional confession. Start small. Try phrases like, "I've been having a hard week," or "I'm more overwhelmed than I let on," or "I don't really know how I'm doing, but it's been heavy".

Choose the right people. Not everyone needs to have access to your inner world - sometimes it makes sense to tell someone you're fine and move along. But find those you trust to open up to, so you don't have to go it alone. Look for someone who listens without rushing to fix, judge, or minimize.

Get Started Today

You don't have to keep saying you're fine while you're drowning. You can choose differently: pause before answering. Share what's true, even if it's just with yourself. When you're ready, reach out to someone who can sit with you in the deep end. These quiet acts of honesty and connection can gradually bring you back to the surface. You can learn more about your overall mental health and wellbeing needs by taking a quick mental health assessment. Do this by scanning or visiting www.learntolive.com/partners and entering access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

