

## Black and White Episode 2: It Is OK To Ask For Help

*Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.*

**CHAD MOSES** [over music]: When we talk about pain or we talk about joy, you shouldn't have to justify the things that make you smile or the things that break your heart. These are responses that your heart has been specifically attuned to. You don't need your pain to be worse than someone else's in order for it to be valid.

*[music playing]*

**LINDSAY KOLSCH**: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. We'll be sharing stories and conversations about topics we tend not to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. With so much gray area in the world today, we feel it's important to draw a line in the sand when it comes to a few of the things we believe about people and mental health. Last May, during Mental Health Month, we highlighted four statements that have guided TWLOHA's mission since day one. This year, we're focusing on four more statements:

I Am Worthy Of Hope  
It Is OK To Ask For Help  
Your Story Is Important

And finally,

We Need You Here

*[music playing]*

**LINDSAY**: At TWLOHA, we believe these four statements are non-negotiable. To us, these statements are Black and White. And in honor of Mental Health Month, we've created a special miniseries featuring four episodes to highlight each statement. We're going to be sharing a bit more about what those words mean to us and this movement. We'll be highlighting a few action steps you can take that are also inspired by these words. To learn more about what TWLOHA is doing this month, you can read the [Black and White blog post](#) and check out our merch collection on [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).

Today I'm gonna be joined by Chad Moses, a member of our team. You heard his voice at the top of this episode with an excerpt. We hope this conversation is encouraging, and we're excited to share it with you.

*[music playing leading into interview]*

**LINDSAY:** Hey guys, this is Lindsay Kolsch, your host for the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast. Today I'm joined by our very own Chad Moses. Chad serves as the Director of Outreach on our team and we're sitting down today to continue our conversation about the Black and White collection. Chad, welcome. Thank you for joining.

**CHAD:** Thanks for having me.

**LINDSAY:** So we are talking about these statements, black and white statements. And the next one we want to talk about, one that I'm really excited to kind of have a conversation with you about because it's closely connected to the way I see my own story and my own journey of mental health is, is this phrase: "It Is OK to Ask for Help." I just want to say that one more time: "It Is OK to Ask for Help." I think, for me, it's something I have to come back to, but I want to get into it with you a little bit, want to talk a little bit more about the phrase. What does that mean? What are we trying to say when we say that simple statement?

**CHAD:** That really, the first step towards anyone's recovery is going to be throwing up a hand and say, *'look, I can't handle this by myself. I could really use some help here.'* So there's some beauty in the lack of poetry in "It's OK to Ask for Help." And the hope is that you wouldn't get lost in any of the words around it but let each of these words kind of fall fresh on you, that they're impactful individually and you throw them all together...and that's the reason that we're in this office today is we find the value in asking for help.

**LINDSAY:** What keeps people from asking?

**CHAD:** If you've ever had a chance to sit in on one of our MOVE Community Conferences, this is something that Aaron and Michelle Moore touch on every single time. They ask two basic questions. They first say, *'Hey, if you are struggling, what are some reasons that you might not ask for help?'* And you see people really bravely say, *'I don't expect to get that help. Uh, I don't want people to look at me differently. I don't want people to assume that I don't have my life together. Uh, I'm afraid of what comes next. What happens when I admit I need help? Then there needs to be a response.'* And then Aaron and Michelle often ask, *'If you believe that someone in your community is hurting, what are some reasons that you don't encourage them to ask for help? Why? What keeps you from offering help?'* And you often see a similar set of, of phrases come up saying, *'What if it's my fault? What if I don't know how to help? What if I am incapable of helping? I didn't go to school to help. Am I worthy of giving that help?'*

**CHAD:** So I think so often you, you really fall on this common ground of worth, of *'am I worth the help'* or *'am I worthy of giving that help?'* And this all kind of points back to, to the idea of shame. Aaron said it best, so I'm going to copy him. Guilt says *'I did something wrong'* where shame says *'I am something wrong.'* And that is, that's a heavy weight for anyone to carry. So the hope in encouraging people to ask for help is to say, look, we, we're all swimming through the same questions here, that no one has been untouched by a feeling of betrayal or shame or feeling unworthy. But because everyone has felt that, then I think we can all collectively speak

out against that lie that, that you can ask for help, that, that helped does exist, that even if you don't know where right now to find that help, just saying you need help is a great way to, to kind of get your bearings, find the compass, and see where it's pointing.

**LINDSAY:** I know personally when I experienced postpartum depression and anxiety, in the thick of those seasons of just a lot of fear and challenges and feelings of shame, feelings of failure of as a, as a new mom, I literally had to be taken aside and my sister said this to me, *'it's OK. Like it's OK to ask for help. We want to help you.'* And that moment still stands out today because I was so trying to swim against all of the experiences of saying it's probably not OK to ask for help or I don't even know I need help. So that felt like a lifeboat. Like it felt like a, like a life raft, you know, an opportunity to say, oh like *'wait, I, maybe I can have some support here'* and I didn't know how to ask for it. So in addition to the shame piece, I think the language of asking for help is really hard and I wonder if, if you have any thoughts about that?

**CHAD:** As you were sharing that story—and thank you for, for sharing a bit of your journey—one thought that came to my mind is so often as people, as human beings, we become, and mental health definitely plays into this, but we become some pretty unreliable narrators to our own story.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. Sure do.

**CHAD:** We, we come to the point where we give ourselves too much credit for the good things that happen and often too much blame for the bad stuff. And for any shame that you've felt, you know, whether it's postpartum or whether it's anxiety or trauma or issues with brain chemistry, you name it, that's not something that you chose. You know, people don't choose the pain that, that is put at their plate. Now it's certain we've all made choices that have resulted in pain, but that's altogether different than saying, *'I'm going to choose this heartache for me in this moment.'* But over time we believe that we've deserved it at some point. And man, like seeing that rest in your story and my story and the stories of the tens and hundreds of thousands of people I meet throughout the year, that's too much to carry. Just plain and simple. That's too much to carry. So even if help is just finding someone else to help you put your own story in perspective. Like don't, don't devalue that.

**LINDSAY:** I think that's a super valuable point because we are saying it's OK to ask for help, but we don't always expect that help is going to look like x or y or z. Now it can look like sitting with a counselor. It can look like sitting down with a psychiatrist, a nutritionist...I mean there's so many different ways to find help, but often the first, the very first thing we hope people will do is tell somebody in their life that they love, that they care about, a friend, a mentor, just letting them know that you do need help. Just strength in numbers. You know, now you've got somebody on your side, like you said, perspective. So I think that's a super important point to bring up.

**CHAD:** So you mentioned that, you know, treatment can look like this, asking for help can look like that. But so often we expect treatment to be formulaic, that A squared plus B squared will always equal C squared. Well, not so when it comes to mental health care and self-care. So you know, your plan deserves to be specific to you and your journey and your goals and your dreams and different things that you're sensitive to. But I am convinced that other people will always be at the heart of a healthy and responsible treatment plan. So yeah, they're always going to look different from one another. What works for you likely won't work for me, and that's something to celebrate and we get to learn from each other on our journeys. However, if you're trying to navigate any of this heartache or any of this mental health burden by yourself, you're doing yourself and your community a disservice ultimately. There are people that have dedicated their lives to making sure that you feel heard, valid, cared for, and that's going to look like friends or family. It's going to look like life coaches and mentors, maybe counselors, but the help does exist.

**CHAD:** So when we talk about help, I think, often the two questions that, that come up the most are, *'who do I ask for help?'* and *'is it OK to ask?'* So the who it's going to take a little bit more digging, but we can say, as forcibly as we can through a podcast audio system, yes. It is absolutely OK to ask for help.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. I wonder, what does that look like in your life, if you don't mind sharing a little bit.

**CHAD:** Yeah. I don't know if I even have fully developed the muscle memory of consistently asking for help when I need it.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** However, I have developed a better sense of kind of emotional inventory and vocabulary and now my community members can track with me. I don't, I've gotten to the point where I don't need to verbally ask for help for the people around me to ask for help on my behalf. And that's taken time and that's taken consistency. But I remember the first time that I asked for help, it came across very angrily and almost like a dare to a friend. And it's so funny how depression can drive different plot points forward that really aren't existent. But I was convinced that I had one friend left on the planet and I had burned every bridge and I thought that I did out of my own volition.

**CHAD:** But there were so many factors playing into this, this really dark period of my life. And I remember my first asking for help was trying to put words in the mouth of my friends saying, *'Hey, am I too much of a wreck for you? Am I too broken for you? Will you leave me alone now?'* That doesn't sound like me asking for help, but my friend heard that and said, *'no, I'm not going to leave you alone in this.'* Uh, so I think a piece of "it's OK to ask for help" is not every petition for help is going to sound the same either.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** That your own history and your own context is going to drive how you ask for that help. But surrounding yourself with people who are invested in your life, they're going to be attuned to, to your needs.

**CHAD:** That takes time. Maybe those people don't currently exist, but know that in time they can exist and they will exist.

*[music playing before break]*

*During Mental Health Month, we're inviting you and supporters everywhere to take this conversation into your community. The Black and White collection of t-shirts and merch is available for a limited time in the TWLOHA Online Store. You can purchase any of the four designs or purchase the collection as a whole. Every order comes with a print and info cards that you can use to start conversations and make an impact in your community. And because we love our podcast listeners, we're offering you 15% off your purchase, to be used at any time throughout the month of May. Enter May15—that's M-A-Y-1-5—at checkout. Thank you so much for your support.*

*[music playing leading back into interview]*

**LINDSAY:** I just thought while you were kind of sharing your own experience, I kind of thought about other situations I've been in where the question, 'hey, are you doing OK?' Or just an attempt to say, you know, 'how are you doing?' It does feel exposing a little bit at that moment. So I would share, if you're the person on the other side wanting to check in on somebody, check with somebody how they're doing, it's going to potentially be a bit of an emotional revealing for them. Could be very vulnerable, but not to be too afraid of that.

**LINDSAY:** I know that in that moment it can kind of feel exposing. People can feel like, 'what do you think there's something wrong with me?' And you can become defensive. Or in your case you said you were angry. And so I would just encourage people that those are normal responses because we are so, perhaps unequipped, to kind of share the parts that do feel shameful, but to not see that as a go-away sign necessarily, unless there's obviously clear boundaries. But I'm curious how you, how do you approach that dynamic? Because undoubtedly there's somebody listening who has someone that they love who is maybe also just not willing to share that. But I wonder if, if the hand, you know, kind of opened and the invitation always sitting there ready is also part of this "it's OK to ask for help" and it's a reminder.

**CHAD:** I think you hit on that, that if it's OK to ask for help, that's one party in this conversation, right? There has to be someone else that's there offering help or receiving that request for help. So I'd say that this phrase is equally applicable on the other side of the coin that you, listener, if

you are concerned about someone in your life who is struggling, it's OK to ask if they need to ask for help.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** I think it's wholesale unfair to ask someone whose life is, they feel like they're holding on by a thread, to expect to stand up straight and, with a bunch of, uh, you know, courage and integrity and—

**LINDSAY:** We're not saying bootstrap this.

**CHAD:** Yeah. Yeah. It's not on you to solely ask for help, but know that you can. Know that that option exists. However we, like you said, we know that there's listeners right now who are listening on behalf of other stories going on in their life. It's OK to offer help even when it's not asked for. It's OK to admire the courage that someone that's struggling is still, you know, waking up day after day. Acknowledge that. Congratulate that person and say, *'Hey, when you're ready to invite someone else in, I'll drive you there. I'll sit in the room with you. I'll be there along the way.'* So going back to my story, when I dared my friend to leave me alone, the most impactful phrase that she told me was, *'look, we will get through this together.'* It wasn't good luck. I believe in you. It wasn't, you can do this. It's, *'we'*...let me be a part of the equation. We will, we will tackle this. You're talking about your parenthood journey. And I just met a woman two weeks ago at, at a festival, and she was saying how she met us at Warped Tour about a decade ago. And her friends were all into To Write Love on Her Arms. They all bought shirts and bought wristbands and over time, you know, just their fashion sense changed and they enter different areas of life. And, and this woman was saying that she didn't know anyone in her immediate community or her circle of friends that struggled with depression or addiction or thoughts of suicide or self-injury. But now she's a mother to a preteen and she's seeing some early signs of post-traumatic stress, of depression, of anxiety.

**CHAD:** And she remembered the conversations that she's had with our website and with our team on offering help. And she's, she was happy to report that now her daughter is, is finding a counselor and starting this journey early. And that's, man, that's a gift that I wish I had, man. Like if, had I started my counseling journey when I was 10, 11, or 12, I wonder, you know, in what kind of chair I'd be sitting in now. But yeah, I mean that's, that's kind of the beauty that the lessons you're learning about asking for help and offering help, they're not just valuable today. They're going to pay dividends down the road. It's like I mentioned earlier, it's that muscle memory.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** So practice, practice with a friend. If you are in a state of emotional equilibrium, find someone that you can walk through a stressful conversation with safely.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** See what feels familiar, see what feels safe, see what words come naturally, and then the next time you have to ask these questions, it won't be the first, you know? Like with anything, it's worth practice in order to make sure that we have a better outcome.

**LINDSAY:** I think when we come back to this phrase, "It's OK to Ask for Help," I remember you kind of mentioning the, the shortness so that you can remember it and say it to yourself. Use it as your own mantra if you're in that difficult season. But underneath the layers of you being able to ask for help and other people being able to ask for help, I think what we're also talking about here is the vulnerability and the gift of being seen, like it's OK to be seen because that's what that moment is about, right? It's being seen for whatever state you find yourself in, whatever struggle you find yourself in. Like ultimately it's still OK. You exist and there's still, there's hope to continue. Right? And that's what that moment is about.

**CHAD:** So if you're looking for good places to begin that conversation, and it's possible that you don't get to choose the time that the conversation arises. We have a number of crisis lines available on our website. Our friends at Crisis Text Line are available 24/7. We have resources that operate on a national level: call in, text in, chat line. And then we also have tools for you to find resources in your own backyard.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. And I want to point back out what you said: the FIND HELP Tool. If it's OK to ask for help then it's OK to also find help. That whole journey is a process and it's not linear, but on our website you can—and we'll make sure these are in the show notes for you all listening—but it's called the FIND HELP Tool, and you put your zip code in if you're in the U.S. and it will come up with different levels of care. Uh, that's another part of the help journey is starting with a friend, family, having the support in your everyday, but then also seeing if, if a counselor is the right fit is the next step. You know, learning tools, helping you manage, whether there's medication involved or other lifestyle things that have to be adjusted. We do hear from people who say, like, they have not suffered enough to get help. What would you say to them?

**CHAD:** Yeah, that's honestly a response that you hear too much and, or, too often. When we talk about pain or we talk about joy, you shouldn't have to justify the things that make you smile or the things that break your heart. These are responses and that, that your heart has been specifically attuned to; you don't need your pain to be worse than someone else's in order for it to be valid. The reality is if you're already saying, *'but someone else is struggling more than me,'* that's already well past time to ask for help. Whenever you get into this comparison mode, that's stigma speaking.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** That's this silent scream saying that, *'yeah, you're not worthy of help because, you*

*know, you should be more grateful.'* All of that is silencing someone else learning more about you.

**CHAD:** And that's the goal. We are here to make sure that you don't have to go through any of this alone.

**LINDSAY:** I'm curious, what are some things for the people listening that they could do with that phrase this month?

**CHAD:** Yeah, I'd say a great thing that you can do is familiarize yourself with some resources that exist on a national level, maybe even on a global level if you're listening from overseas. And also on a local level. Be aware of what exists so when you, when you are offering help or when you're asking for help that it doesn't feel like you're just walking into a jungle of resources, but that you have some paths to follow. Like I mentioned earlier, I think rehearsing some of these conversations is fine. I think spending some time to analyze your own goals is fine. So when I ask for help, what am I asking for? And on the other side, when I'm offering help, what are some things that I feel comfortable offering?

**LINDSAY:** Well, I love what you mentioned about knowing the resources. So we did talk about that a couple times here. But get your phone out when you're not, you know, if you're driving a car or whatever, pull over, get your phone out and put some of these in there whenever you, when you're coming across and make them contacts in your phone because they're so much easier and accessible when you can share them and you have them and you feel equipped to know what's the next best step. I think that's a first starting point, and we'll have links to those on the website so you'll be able to easily add those as contacts or in our FIND HELP Too, actually you can create lists so you can create your own referral list if you want. And you can email those to people when you feel like it's appropriate.

**LINDSAY:** But those are just some ways to get equipped, you know? And then beyond that, I think maybe even more on a fundamental level, we're just inviting you to kind of take this phrase and let it sink in. And let it become also true in your life if you're not quite sure yet that it is true, right? Like, we stand with this phrase and we hope you can stand with it, too. So if it means, like you said, asking a friend, checking on a friend or a family member in the next week or so, do that. Or if it's your own story and you think, you know what, actually I think I need to maybe ask for help. Those are two immediate things that, that you can do.

**LINDSAY:** Well, Chad, thank you so much for joining me on this episode and we're excited to continue sharing about the Black and White collection and I always enjoy our conversations.

**CHAD:** Yeah. See you real soon.

*[music playing]*



**LINDSAY:** Thank you so much for listening to this special miniseries of the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. Thank you to Chad Moses for lending your voice and your heart to this conversation. We would really encourage you to read the full [Black and White blog](#) and check out our merch collection on [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).

**LINDSAY:** We hope each episode is a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and you're not alone. We understand that so many of you listening might be struggling or know someone who is struggling with the issues we've been talking about. We believe that help exists. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources at our websites: [twloha.com](http://twloha.com) and click the FIND HELP at the top of the page. Or, if you need to talk to someone right now, you can always connect with our friends at Crisis Text Line. You simply text the word TWLOHA—that's T-W-L-O-H-A—to 741741 and you'll be connected to a trained crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

**LINDSAY:** If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, we hope you'll subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. And, if you can do us a favor, we'd really love for you to write us a review. It will help more people find this podcast and the mission of TWLOHA. If you have any feedback or questions, please send us an email at [podcast@twloha.com](mailto:podcast@twloha.com).

**LINDSAY:** A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. This episode was produced by Mark Codgen, with editorial support by Claire Biggs of Lore de Force and Becky Ebert. And music assistance provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. I'm Lindsay Kolsch. Thank you so much for listening.

To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and also to invest directly into treatment and recovery. You can find more information about TWLOHA at [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).