

NAVIGATING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

It can be a challenge to determine if a situation is a crisis. Some general indicators can be:

- The behavior puts the person at risk of harming themselves or others.
- Without crisis responding or intervention, the person is likely to have significantly reduced levels of functioning (e.g. placed in a more restrictive setting like the hospital or jail).
- The person cannot resolve a situation with the skills and resources available.

Potential Signs of a Crisis

- Inability to cope with daily tasks
- Hygiene, eating, sleep difficulties
- Sudden changes in mood
- Increased energy or pacing
- Disorganized or delusional speech
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Increased agitation
- Verbal threats
- Physical violence
- Destroys property
- Inappropriate language
- Abusive behavior
- Hurts others
- Self-injury
- Drug/Alcohol abuse

Guidelines for De-escalation

- Ask how you can help
- Use clear language
- Use “I” statements
- Present self as a calming influence
- Use non-threatening body language
- No touching, shouting, or sudden movements
- Provide validation/acceptance
- Use active listening skills
- Paraphrase concerns
- Focus on strengths
- Build hope - resolution is possible!
- Reduce distractions (ask others to leave, turn off the TV, etc.)
- Do not personalize
- It is okay to be silent
- Speak quietly and calmly (avoid yelling)

Behaviors & Responses to Avoid

- Challenging delusional thinking or beliefs that seem untrue or false to you
- Arguing or threatening
- Intense questioning
- Sarcasm, laughing, or humor
- Sudden or unannounced actions
- Restricting the person's movements
- Other statements or actions that you expect could increase the person's fear or aggression

REMEMBER!

EVERY SITUATION IS UNIQUE AND CRISIS SITUATIONS CAN BE HARD TO PREDICT.

Additional Ways to Help

- Do not leave the person alone unless you are concerned about your personal safety.
- Take a break from de-escalation if needed, but try to remain in contact in some way.
- Mental health professionals always advocate seeking professional help for someone who has suicidal thoughts.
- Try to involve the person in the decision-making about what to do, who should be told, and how to seek professional help.
- Use phrases that support feelings of control and safety:
“Would that be all right?”
“Do I have that right?”
“So, let me see if I got this. You are saying...”
“Would you mind if I...”
“I can see why you'd feel that way.”



24/7 INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org)

**Crisis Text Line
Text "HOME"
to 741-741**

Trevor Project
suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people.

**Text: 'START' to 678-678
or call 1-866-488-7386**

CALLING 911



Remember:

Try and stay calm.

Let the operator know the person is having a mental health crisis.

Ask them to send someone who is trained in mental health crises.

Crisis Checklist

Adapted from NAMI, 2018

It is important to prepare BEFORE a crisis occurs. Talk with the person during calm times and make a plan.

Keep the information below in a location that is easy to remember and access - 911 may ask you for this information when you reach out for help.

- Person's general information
- Contact information for family
- Contact information for health care professionals
- Strategies and treatments that have worked in the past
- A list of what might make the situation worse and a list of what might help
- Current medication(s) and dosages
- Current diagnosis(es)
- Person's treatment preferences
- Contact information for nearby crisis centers or emergency rooms
- Contact information for adults the person trusts
- Safety plans



IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY AT ANY TIME, LEAVE THE LOCATION IMMEDIATELY

**to learn more
or find a center near you, visit:
heads-up-pa.org**



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