



EDUCATIONAL VIDEO SERIES

Responding to a Mental Health Crisis



➔ What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis is a situation in which someone's emotional distress negatively affects their ability to function as they normally would. A person experiencing this may be at risk of hurting themselves.

➔ What are the signs and symptoms?

Recognizing signs of emotional distress is the first step in seeking help for yourself or someone you care about.

Here are five signs that may indicate someone is in emotional distress and needing help:

1. Subtle or obvious personality or behavior changes.
2. Mood changes - suddenly or gradually becoming more agitated, irritable, anxious, or angry.
3. Withdrawing from social support like family, friends, or coworkers.
4. Lack of self-care - Personal hygiene may be off, or you may see an increase poor decision-making, use of alcohol or illicit drugs, or other self-destructive behaviors.
5. Feelings of hopelessness, overwhelm, guilt, shame, or worthlessness.

➔ What do I do if I recognize the signs?

Here are ways you can offer support to someone who may be struggling:

Reach out

Reaching out to someone who is struggling can be intimidating or awkward, especially if the person does not want to or is hesitant to open up about a potential personal issue or problem. However, asking if someone is doing ok, with the potential to help, is worth the risk.



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Main points

1. A mental health crisis is a situation where emotional distress becomes too great and normal day-to-day functions become impossible for a person to complete on their own.
2. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of emotional distress are key to finding help and getting back on track.
3. You can take action if you recognize the signs of emotional distress in your coworkers.
4. If you are worried you may be experiencing a mental or emotional crisis, there are steps you can take to get help.

Offer reassurance and support

- Reassure your colleague that it's OK to feel the way they do and that there are many resources to can help them address the issues they are facing.
- Offer to help them with something that day, like providing transportation, taking a phone call, assisting with scheduling appointments for them or joining them for lunch.
- Avoid saying things like, "you'll be fine," "get over it," or "it is what it is." These are dismissive comments that undermine their thoughts and feelings.
- Avoid passive statements like, "Let me know how I can help." This puts more pressure on them to come up with ways you can help them. Think of specific ways in which you can be of assistance instead.

Here are a few helpful tips to make reaching out to initiate and continue conversation easier:

- Invite the person to talk by starting with a question like, "Hey, I've noticed you've been acting a bit different lately. Is everything OK?"
- Do not push the person to talk. If they don't want to chat, offer your support by saying, "No worries if you don't want to talk. If you ever do, I'm here to listen."
- Express that you care, that you are concerned about their well-being and that you're there to support them.
- The person may already be aware of their illness and in the midst of managing it. If this is the case, let them know you're happy to hear they are getting the support they need and if they'd like to talk about it, you are there to listen. If the person has not sought help, let them know that you will help connect them to resources if that's OK with them.

Listen

- Listen non-judgmentally and allow the other person do most of the talking.
- Avoid offering solutions. It's likely you are not qualified to recommend a solution for their specific issue. However, you should provide reassurance that there is help and you can help connect them.
- Stay calm. Understand that what they tell you may be distressing, but it's important to avoid reacting in a manner that adds more distress.
- Be patient and avoid trying to coax more information out of the person. Let them tell you what they want at their own pace.

How can I help myself?

If you think you are experiencing symptoms of mental illness, your first line of defense is to talk to your primary care doctor or another physician. A doctor can provide basic education and insight on what you are experiencing and can make referrals to the appropriate type of mental health service.

If you have limited access to health insurance or other circumstances that restrict access to health care through traditional channels, here are more options to consider:

1. Visit a local social services agency or community health center.
2. Some mental health providers or clinics offer services based on ability to pay or what's known as a sliding-fee scale.
3. Some communities have walk-in mental health clinics that are free and anonymous.
4. If you're living in a rural area and getting to a doctor is difficult, telehealth or online counseling services may be an option. Online counseling services often allow flexible scheduling and payment plans, making it an affordable option.



Refer to professional help

As needed, connect yourself or the person you are concerned about with a mental health professional. Professional mental health services are the second line of defense. Some mild mental illnesses can be treated through primary care, but often patients will be referred to mental health professionals like psychotherapists who engage in talk therapy or psychiatrists who are specialized in diagnosing and treating mental illness. Mental health professionals develop individualized treatment plans for specific illnesses and needs.

Finding professional help

When seeking mental health services, consider requesting your health insurance company provide a list of covered services and in-network providers. This will avoid unexpected or large health care bills, which can compound stress.



Lifestyle changes can be made in addition to professional treatment addressing mental illness. Some that can be made at home include:

- Adhering to the treatment plan prescribed by doctor(s).
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol. These substances alter our state of mind and make treating mental illness difficult.
- Eating healthy, increasing exercise and getting the right amount of sleep.
- Avoiding making critical decisions while experiencing severe symptoms of mental illness.
- Managing time and determining what's priority to avoid additional stress from the demands of life. There may be a need to cut back on obligations during times of severe symptoms.
- Practicing having a more positive outlook and attitude. Accepting change as it happens to keep problems in perspective.
- Reducing stress by trying meditation or other relaxation techniques.
- Utilizing available workplace resources.

If you are worried you may be experiencing a mental health crisis or having thoughts of suicide, call, text or chat 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Contact

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About SAVE

SAVE is a national nonprofit dedicated to ending the tragedy of suicide through education, training, advocacy, and support for suicide loss survivors. We fulfill our mission by:

- Educating and empowering people to identify suicide warning signs and refer those at risk to the support they need;
- Providing empathetic assistance and valuable resources to help suicide loss survivors navigate the devastating loss of a loved one;
- Advocating at state and national levels to amplify voices of those impacted by suicide and create meaningful change.

By offering free educational resources, teaching life-saving skills, supporting suicide loss survivors, and advocating for change, we believe we can make a significant impact and save lives.

About WTW

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IDEAL BODY ENVIRONMENT AND MIND

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