



MENTAL HEALTH

With the growing instances of mental health emergencies facing our population today, it is important to have some basic knowledge about what to do in case of an emergency. Do you wonder, will I be able to recognize when someone is suffering from a mental health crisis? What do I do if someone is threatening to harm themselves or others? What do I say? Who do I call? This resource will provide basic information on how to answer these questions and respond appropriately.

Warning signs that may indicate someone is in crisis:

- Inability to perform daily tasks like bathing, brushing teeth, brushing hair, changing clothes
- Rapid mood swings, increased energy level, inability to stay still, pacing
- Suddenly depressed, withdrawn; suddenly happy or calm after period of depression
- Increased agitation, verbal threats, violent, out-of-control behavior, destroys property
- Isolation from school, work, family, friends
- Paranoia
- Increased or new substance usage
- Constant sleeping or Insomnia

Common warning signs of suicide include:

- Giving away personal possessions
- Talking as if they're saying goodbye or going away forever
- Taking steps to tie up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Stockpiling pills or obtaining a weapon
- Preoccupation with death
- Sudden cheerfulness or calm after a period of despondency

What to do if someone is in crisis/at risk of suicide:

- If safe, keep them talking. Ask things that require more than a yes and no response like:
 - Tell me how you are you feeling?
 - What happened to make you feel this way?
 - What can I do to help you right now?
 - "Let's go get something to eat or spend the day together."
(Diverting their attention is extremely beneficial).

**Remember, Asking questions without judgement is essential.
Remind them they are not alone and you are willing to help them.**

Never say things like:

- "We all go through tough times like these. You'll be fine."
- "It's all in your head. Just snap out of it."
- "You think you have problems, well look what happened to me."
- "Get some sleep and things will look differently tomorrow."
- "Grow up and stop feeling sorry for yourself."



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Instead, say...

- Ask them if they have a therapist or counselor they would like to reach out to
- Tell them you would be happy to assist them with getting to the hospital or crisis clinic and are willing to stay with them during the assessment process (*this is a scary step for some people so having someone there with them is extremely beneficial*)
- Ask them if they are thinking about completing suicide. An example of what to say could be: “Based on what you’ve shared with me, I’m wondering if you’re thinking about suicide?” If they answer yes, find out more details and ask them if they have a plan such as, “Do you have a plan on how you would do it?”

- ***IF they answer yes to the question regarding suicide:***

- **Call 911** Make sure to notify the operator that it is a psychiatric emergency and ask for an officer trained in crisis intervention.
- **Reach out** to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to speak with a trained crisis counselor.
- **Send a text message** to the Crisis Text Line to 741-741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor to receive crisis support via text message.

This educational resource was developed by Anna Bell, LICSW, LCSW-C, LISW for the Hemophilia Federation of America. March 2019