



IBEAM

Ideal Body Environment And Mind



Video Four: Responding to a Mental Health Crisis

Main Points

1. A mental health crisis is a situation where emotional distress becomes too great and normal day-to-day functions become impossible to complete on your own.
2. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of emotional distress are key to finding help and getting your life 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.

➤ What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis refers to a situation in which someone's emotional distress negatively affects their ability to function as they normally would. This person 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 5 signs that may indicate someone is in emotional distress and might need help:

1. Subtle or obvious personality or behavior change.
2. Mood changes, suddenly or gradually become more agitated, irritable, anxious, or angry.
3. Withdrawn from social support like family, friends, or coworkers.
4. Lack of self-care. Personal hygiene may be off, making poor choices, increase use of alcohol or illicit drugs, or engaging in other self-destructive behaviors.
5. Feelings of hopelessness, feeling overcome by life circumstances, and feelings of guilt, shame, or worthlessness.

➤ What do I do if I recognize the signs?

If you recognize the signs of a mental health crisis, there are ways you can offer your 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.



Offer reassurance and support

- Reassure your colleague that it's ok to feel the way they do and that there are many resources that can help them address the issues they are facing.
- Offer to help them with something you can do 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, “Ok, no worries if you don’t want to talk, but if you ever do, I’m here to listen.”
- Express that you care and are concerned about their well-being and 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 nonjudgmentally 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 do not have or cannot obtain health insurance or are experiencing other circumstance that does not allow seeking health care through traditional channels, there are a few other options to consider:

1. A local social services agency or community health center.
2. Some mental health providers or clinics may offer services based on ability to pay or what’s known as a sliding fee scale.
3. Some communities have a walk-in mental health clinic that is 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 also be an option. Online counseling services often allow flexible scheduling and payment plans, making it an affordable option.



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

- Adherence to the treatment plan prescribed by doctor(s).
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These substances alter our state of mind and make treating mental illness difficult.
- Eat healthy, get more exercise, and the right amount of sleep.
- Try not to make critical decisions while experiencing severe symptoms of mental illness.
- Manage your time and determine 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.
- Practice having a more positive outlook and attitude. Accept change as it happens and keep problems in perspective.
- Reduce stress by trying meditation or other relaxation techniques.
- Utilize workplace resources that are available.

When seeking mental health services, always request from the health insurance company to provide a list of covered services and in network providers. This is a vital step to avoid unexpected or large health care bills, which can be an additional stressor.

Professional mental health services are the second line of defense. Some mild mental illnesses can be treated through primary care, but often those experiencing mental illness 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. The main job of a mental health professional is to help develop a treatment plan that is individualized to specific illness and needs.

If you are worried you may be experiencing a mental health crisis or having thoughts of suicide, call the National Lifeline at +1 800-273-8255 OR text "Hello" to the Crisis Text Line at 741-741 for free, confidential 24/7 support.

➤ **Find more information about mental health at**
willistowerswatson.com/underthehardhat

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About SAVE

SAVE is the nation's leading nonprofit agency working to prevent suicide through public awareness and education, reduce stigma, and serve as a resource to those touched by suicide. For more than 30 years SAVE has been at the forefront of suicide prevention and is the world's leader in developing safe messaging standards, practices and awareness campaigns on suicide prevention. We developed an evidence-based program for suicide prevention, numerous best practice tools and a peer support program to help those in crisis. SAVE also conducts professional training, education, technical assistance and provides consultation to businesses, organizations, communities and governments on all aspects of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention (grief after suicide).

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