

How to Support Someone Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis

What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis can happen to anyone of any age. It can look different depending on the person, but the biggest thing to watch for is **when your loved one's behavior or mood has changed so much that they can't go about daily life**. Mental health crises can also look like emotional outbursts – which are often a cry for help.

What can a crisis look like?

- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Panic attacks or self-harm
- Psychotic episodes, where the person sees and hears things that are not present, and may act in extreme ways
- New risky behaviors (drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping, driving recklessly)
- Newly increased agitation or anger
- Social isolation/avoidance over a long period of time



What can you do if you think a loved one is having a crisis?

A

OR

B

A medical emergency

Call 911 or take them to the nearest hospital.



A mental health crisis

Talk to them one-on-one or privately.

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Ask them about what's going on, how they're feeling, and what might be causing their changes in behavior.

If your loved one is suicidal

Don't leave them alone and do ask if they would like to go to the hospital for help.

Call 911 with them, if needed.

What can you say to someone going through a crisis?



DON'T

Don't use confrontational language such as:
"Why are you acting out and causing problems for everyone?"

Don't interrupt them or dismiss or reject their feelings. Don't say, "Is that it?" or "Other people have it worse right now."



DO

Do use open-ended, simple questions, like: "What's going on?"
"How are you feeling?"

Do stay calm and give them space to talk. Be kind and accepting. "It sounds like you're having a hard time, how can I help?"

Things to keep in mind

As the helper, your main priority is to ensure your loved one's safety and to provide them with a place to go if they choose to seek help. Understand that your loved one also does not have to tell you anything. They might refuse to talk about their crisis and that's okay. You can still support them without knowing the full story by offering resources.

Remember to also take care of yourself. If you're feeling upset or distressed after helping someone through a mental health crisis, you can seek mental health resources, like counseling, to process and understand your own reactions.



Resources

Council of Peoples Organization

- 1077 Coney Island Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11230
- (929) 706-9106 | info@copo.org | anuzzi@copo.org
- Arabic, Bangla, Dari, English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu

Arab American Association of New York

- Bayside, Brooklyn
- (718) 745-3523 | info@arabamericanny.org
- Arabic, English

Garden of Hope

- Flushing, Queens
- (877) 990-8595 | info@gohny.org
- Cantonese, English, Fujianese, Mandarin, Taiwanese

Hamilton-Madison House

- 253 South Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10002
- (212) 720-4540 | BehavioralHealth@hmonline.org
- Cambodian, Cantonese, Fujianese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, English

Korean Community Services

- 203-05 32nd Ave, Bayside, NY 11361
- (718) 366-9540 | kcsmh@kcsny.org
- English, Korean

South Asian Council for Social Services

- 143 02 45th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11355
- (718) 321-7929 | sacss@sacssny.org
- Bangla, Cantonese, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Malay, Mandarin, Nepali, Punjabi, Tamil, Tagalog, Telugu, Urdu

Sapna NYC

- 2348 Waterbury Ave, Bronx, NY 10462
- (718) 828-9772 | info@sapnanyc.org
- Bangla, English, Hindi, Urdu