

A mental health crisis means that a person's feelings or problems are so strong that they cannot do what they need to do that day. A mental health crisis may also mean that the person is at risk of hurting themselves or others.

### Signs of a mental health crisis:

These are some common signs that a person may be having a mental health crisis:

- Not able to do daily activities like bathing, brushing teeth, or changing clothes.
- Changes in mood, increased energy level, or restless
- Suddenly sad, withdrawn, not wanting to be around other people.
- Angry, verbal threats, violent, destroying property.
- Using drugs or other substances, self-harm like cutting, abusive behavior.
- Not able to recognize family or friends, confused, strange ideas, thinks they are someone they are not, hearing voices, seeing things that are not there.



### How long does a mental health crisis last?

Sometimes a crisis will only last a few minutes; other times, a crisis can last for days or months. It depends on how quickly the person is able to get help and the type of coping skills they have. If a person is able to widen their resilient or "OK" zone, they may be able to recover from a mental health crisis more quickly.

### What should I do if the person I support is having a mental health crisis:

The most important thing to do in a crisis is to **TELL SOMEONE**, this could be talking to you as their DSP, a parent, friend, other support staff, therapist, or trusted adult. Encourage the person to be honest about the thoughts and feelings they are having. Be open and nonjudgemental and let them know you are there to support them. If they need more help, they can talk to a professional by calling or texting the National Suicide Helpline at **9-8-8**. If they need immediate help to stay safe, you should **CALL 9-1-1**.

## How can I help prevent a mental health crisis?

It is helpful to plan how to handle a crisis before it happens. Having a plan can help the person you support get through a mental health crisis more easily or even prevent a crisis from happening.

Their plan should include:

- A list of triggers that may cause a mental health crisis along with warning signs that a person may be having a hard time and need additional supports.
- Strategies to help them feel calm again. These can include things like the resilience skills, coping strategies they've learned from a therapist, or even simple things like going for a walk or listening to music. The strategies should be individualized for each person.
- Phone numbers for trusted adults and emergency providers.



You or a mental health professional can help them create a mental health crisis plan. They can also help them to learn and practice skills for managing their emotions.

Once a crisis plan has been developed, a copy of the plan should be available for all support staff and the individual to access when needed. This could mean keeping a printed copy in a common area, or even having a version that is able to be saved on a smartphone or tablet for easy access.