

# How to Get Help During a Mental Health Crisis

Your mental health can go through ups and downs, just like your physical health. Sometimes when your mental health goes too far off course, it can lead to a mental health crisis.

A mental health crisis is different than the usual challenges you may face when living with a mental health condition. On most days, you may feel like you can manage your condition's symptoms.

But when you're in a crisis, it can feel like you're driving a car on an icy road. You try to use the brakes and slow down, but you just keep sliding.

In a crisis, you may find yourself in dangerous situations. Maybe you feel like you could harm yourself or others. Or you may be using alcohol and drugs in unhealthy ways.

It may be hard to know what to do when you're experiencing a crisis. It helps to make a plan now so that you're able to find the support you need later.

Making a plan that can keep you safe is kind of like doing a fire drill. You plan—and practice—how you will get out safely if there's a fire. That way, in an actual emergency, you know exactly what to do to reach safety.

When you make your crisis plan, list a few of the things that may lead to a crisis for you. What are some of the thoughts or feelings you would have? Do you see certain images? Are there certain situations or people you could try to avoid?

Now, think about how you've handled a tough situation in the past. How did you get through it? Were there things you did that helped shift your thinking? Maybe you were able to get outside for a walk. Or maybe you tried a breathing technique that helped. Or you called a supportive friend. Write down anything you've done in the past that could be helpful for you during a mental health crisis.

Is there someone you trust you could put on your list? It can be a friend, a relative, or others who have been there for you before.

There are groups and crisis centers you can call for help in the United States and Canada. Trained counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the United States, the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 988.

You can also reach out to the National Alliance on Mental Illness at 1-800-950-6264, or text NAMI (say "N-A-M-I") to 741741. In Canada, resources include Crisis Services Canada.

That number is 1-833-456-4566. You can also learn about other crisis centers online at the Canadian Mental Health Association. From there, you can find help in your area.

You may even want to put those numbers in your phone. Or write them down so they're there when you need them.

The person who answers your call at a crisis line will listen to you, and then give you the support you need by offering resources and suggestions. So you don't need to hold back.

And if you don't have a plan yet, but you think you could be in danger now, get emergency help right away. Call 911 or go to an emergency room, and tell them you're having a mental health crisis.

If you're struggling, but you don't think you're in danger, reach out to a friend, relative, doctor or mental health professional, or someone else you can trust. Together, you can decide what steps to take next.

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Remember, having a plan can help keep you safe in a time of crisis.

When you're having a mental health crisis, it can feel scary or out of control. But remember, you can find the help you need.

Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness. It's actually a sign of strength. Because it takes strength to admit you need help. And it's okay to ask for it.