

Managers Guide for Mental Health crisis

1. How do I know if someone is experiencing a mental health crisis?

- Only a trained professional can diagnose someone with a mental illness.
- If you notice changes in a person's mood, their behaviour, energy, habits or personality, you should consider a mental illness being a possible reason for these changes.
- It is important to learn about mental illnesses and the signs and symptoms.
- Do not ignore symptoms that you notice or assume they will go away.
- Remain aware that each individual is different and not everyone experiencing a mental illness will show the typical signs and symptoms.

2. How should I approach someone?

- Give the person opportunities to talk. It can be helpful to let the person choose when to open up. However if they do not initiate conversation about how they are feeling, you should say something to them. Speak openly and honestly about your concerns.
- Choose a suitable time to talk in a space you both feel comfortable where there will be no interruptions, when you are both sober and in a calm frame of mind.
- Use 'I' statements such as 'I have noticed...and feel concerned' rather than 'you' statements.
- Let the person know you are concerned about them and are willing to help.
- Respect how the person interprets their symptoms.
- If the person doesn't feel comfortable talking

to you, encourage them to discuss how they are feeling with a Medic or a counsellor/psychologist at Lifeskills Centre.

3. How can I be supportive?

- Treat the person with respect and dignity
- Do not blame the person for their illness
- Offer consistent emotional support and understanding
- Encourage the person to talk to you
- Be a good listener
- Give the person hope for recovery
- If the person would like information, make sure the resources you provide are accurate and appropriate to their situation.

4. What doesn't help?

- Telling them to 'snap out of it' or 'get over it'
- Being hostile or sarcastic
- Being over-involved or over-protective
- Nagging
- Trivializing a person's experience by pressuring them to 'put a smile on their face,' to 'get their act together' etc.,
- Belittling or dismissing the person's feelings by saying things like 'You don't seem that bad to me.'
- Speaking in a patronizing tone of voice
- Trying to cure the person or come up with answers to their problems.

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5. Should I encourage the person to seek professional help? Yes

- Ask the person if they need help to manage how they are feeling.
- It is important to become familiarized with services available through your workplace i.e: your EAP Provider - Lifeskills Centre
- If they feel they do need help get them to call Lifeskills Centre or ask them if you can assist them with making the call.

6. What if the person doesn't want help?

- You should find out if there are any specific reasons they why they do not want to seek help. They may be based on mistaken beliefs. You may be able help the person overcome their worry about seeking help.
- If the person still doesn't want help after you've explored their reasons, but you feel uneasy about leaving them, it would be advisable to call your HR Department to notify them.
- There are a lot a reason a person my refuse help, especially when it comes to a medical assessment or counselling, as they may feel their job could be on the line if they present with a mental illness.
- You can only support and encourage them that this is the right thing to do and that work colleagues/management will support them whilst they receive assistance to get better.

7. What if the person is suicidal?

- Suicide can be prevented. Most suicidal people do not want to die. They simply do not want to live with the pain.
- It is important to take suicidal thoughts and behaviors seriously.
- Openly talking about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.
- It is important that you know the warning signs and risk factors for suicide, and the reasons why a person might have thoughts of suicide.

Helping a person who is suicidal is complex, however there are three key actions to helping a person who is suicidal:

1. If you think someone may be suicidal, ask them directly.
2. If they say yes, do not leave them alone.
3. Link them with your EAP Provider, Lifeskills Centre for professional help or in extreme circumstance dial '000' for immediate assistance.

**Managers
Hotline 24/7
1800 870 080**