NAVIGATING a mental health CRISIS

WHAT TO DO in a mental health crisis

IF YOU ARE WORRIED that you or your loved one is in crisis or nearing a crisis, seek help. Make sure to assess the immediacy of the situation to help determine where to start or who to call.

- Is the person in danger of hurting themselves, others or property?
- Do you have time to start with a phone call for guidance and support from a mental health professional?
- Do you need emergency assistance?

If the situation is life-threatening or if serious property damage is occurring, don’t hesitate to call 911 and ask for immediate assistance.

When Calling 911 for a Mental Health Emergency

Remember to:
- Remain calm
- Explain that your loved one is having a mental health crisis and is not a criminal
- Ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer, if available

They will ask:
- Your name
- The person’s name, age, description
- The person’s current location
- Whether the person has access to a weapon

Information you may need to communicate:
- Mental health history, diagnosis(es)
- Medications, current/discontinued
- Suicide attempts, current threats
- Prior violence, current threats
- Drug use
- Contributing factors (i.e. current stressors)
- What has helped in the past
- Any delusions, hallucinations, loss of touch with reality

TECHNIQUES that May Help De-escalate a Crisis:

- Keep your voice calm
- Avoid overreacting
- Listen to the person
- Express support and concern
- Avoid continuous eye contact
- Ask how you can help
- Keep stimulation level low
- Move slowly
- Offer options instead of trying to take control
- Avoid touching the person unless you ask permission
- Be patient
- Gently announce actions before initiating them
- Give them space, don’t make them feel trapped
- Don’t make judgmental comments
- Don’t argue or try to reason with the person

If you don’t feel safe at any time, leave the location immediately.

NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org

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NAMI HelpLine: 800-950-NAMI (6264) Text “NAMI” to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line