

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

KNOWING THE SIGNS OF CRISIS

A person in crisis may feel such psychological pain that they can't think clearly.

A person can experience an emotional crisis for many reasons: loss of a job, the break-up of a relationship, financial problems, death of a loved one, or any other distressing event. A person in crisis may feel such psychological pain that they can't think clearly, make decisions, and have trouble functioning. Other signs of an emotional crisis, especially for someone who is depressed, include the following:

- The person talks about feeling hopeless, has no reason to live, or wants to die.
- The person talks about being in unbearable pain with no way out, or feels like a burden to others.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- Decline in performance at work or school.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Withdrawal from others.
- Extreme mood swings.
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits.

You can show support to someone in crisis by staying calm and listening without judging or acting shocked. A person under extreme emotional distress may be at risk of hurting themselves or others. If you are concerned about the person's mental state or safety, it's important to ask if they've been thinking about hurting themselves. You aren't "planting" the idea of suicide by asking direct questions. Research shows that people who are having suicidal thoughts feel relief when someone asks these questions in a caring way. Show that you care and want to help.

If the person is considering suicide and has a plan, especially a detailed plan, the immediate risk is greater. It's important to get professional help from a mental health provider, physician, or suicide/crisis hotline even if the person argues or resists. You can also encourage the person to contact their therapist if they have one. Don't leave the person alone while waiting for help, and remove any objects that can be used in a suicide attempt. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline can be reached by calling 988 or 1-800-273-8255. If the person is in immediate danger, call 911.

Hospitalization is often necessary after a suicide attempt or when a person's risk of suicide is high. Once the person is medically stable, therapy with a trained professional can help him or her recover. Antidepressants and other medications may be prescribed in addition to therapy. Addiction treatment may be necessary if the person is also struggling with alcohol or other drugs. As with other major illnesses, recovery is a process.

