

Understanding Crisis: A fact sheet for adults experiencing crisis

What is a crisis? A crisis is an emotional and physical reaction to a life event. The life events that can cause a crisis are diverse, and may include receiving a new medical diagnosis, loss of a loved one, experiencing violence, witnessing a natural disaster, or being exposed to triggers that bring back past trauma. A crisis event may interfere with your ability to cope and do daily activities.

How do I know if I am in crisis? Everyone experiences a crisis in a unique way. Often a crisis event is time limited, and you may experience one or more of the following feelings and thoughts:

- Loss of control
- Loss of hope
- Unsafe
- Unable to solve problems
- Overwhelmed
- Numb
- Intense anger
- Self-hatred
- Like life is no longer worth living



What should I do if I am in a crisis? Although we may have limited control over events that cause crisis, we do have control over how we choose to manage and recover. Here are some things you can do when you feel like you are in a crisis:

- **Talk to Someone** - Reaching out and talking to someone about how you are feeling is the first step in getting support. You may reach out to a person you trust including a friend, neighbour, care provider, or a counsellor at calling your local crisis line. When speaking with someone regarding how you are feeling it should be in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Look after your safety** – If you are in an unsafe situation, try to remove yourself and reach out to someone who could help you stay safe.
- **Recognize your strengths** – You may already have the skills and abilities that can help you grow. If you are unable to recognize them yourself, you can ask a person you trust to help you list them.
- **Take care of yourself** – Engage in self-care activities including eating a balanced diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep. Give yourself permission to take time off from the situation, if possible, and do things you enjoy.

See the next page for ideas about how to seek help in case you are experiencing a crisis.

Where do I get help if I am in a crisis? Remember that you are not alone and help is available. There are many people and organizations available to help you. If you need to talk to someone right away, you can call your local crisis line or mobile crisis team. You can also seek assistance through contacting the police, or by going to the emergency room of your local hospital. Your care provider is able to give you further details regarding access to ongoing supports, including referrals to other resources (e.g., peer support groups and other community agencies) and professionals (counselling).

How do I ensure that I can cope with crisis in the future? Your care provider is available to provide support. You may want to talk about your concerns with your provider and write down ways in which you could manage any future crisis. Keep this list to refer to in the future, as a way to remind you of possible actions to take during a crisis.

After discussing your concerns with your care provider or support person, you may want to ask yourself these questions and record your responses:

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Who can I talk to when I feel I am in a crisis?

Name: _____ Number: _____

Name: _____ Number: _____

What makes me feel safe?

What are signs that I am becoming distressed?

When I am feeling unable to cope, I need:

What can I do to try to calm myself?

What can others do to help?

Other ways to help me deal with my crisis situation:

This fact sheet was developed to go with the RNAO best practice guideline (BPG) *Crisis Intervention for Adults Using a Trauma-Informed Approach: Initial Four Weeks of Management* (2017). It is intended to increase your knowledge, and help you take part in decisions about your health or the health of a family member. RNAO's BPGs are available for public viewing and free download at RNAO.ca/bestpractices