Crisis Planning

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO AVOID A CRISIS

COMMUNITY CARE
Behavioral Health Organization
Getting Your Family and Friends to Help You Avoid a Crisis

Your family members and friends can help you avoid a crisis. The more they know about you and your illness, the better prepared they will be to help you when you’re in need. These are some of the things you can do to prepare your family members and friends to help you avoid a crisis:

☐ Teach them about your illness and your needs.

☐ Share your feelings with them.

☐ Make sure they know your early warning symptoms.

☐ Have them talk to your doctor, nurse, therapist, or other member of your treatment team so they can help you plan what to do to prevent a crisis situation.

☐ Suggest they join a support group for family members and friends.

☐ Teach them what to do if an emergency situation should happen.

When you feel that a crisis situation may be coming, what can your family members and friends do to help you avoid it?

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People Who Can Help You in a Crisis

Record the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the people you can call for help in a crisis. Make copies yourself or ask your therapist if he or she can make copies for you. Give one copy to each person on the list so they know about each other. Keep your copy in a place that’s handy so you’ll be able to get it when you need it.

My doctor

Name:  
Address:  
Phone:  

My therapist

Name:  
Address:  
Phone:  

Other member of my treatment team

Name:  
Address:  
Phone:  
### People Who Can Help You in a Crisis (continued)

#### My family

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#### My friends

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Practicing Your Communication Skills

This exercise may help you feel more relaxed when you talk on the phone. The phone is an important way for you to stay in touch with other people.

Making an Important Phone Call

Let’s say you’re having early warning symptoms. You need to call your doctor, nurse, or therapist right away. Think about the call in small, easy-to-manage steps. Focus on only one step at a time.

1. Write down on a tablet or piece of paper who you will call and the phone number. Write down what you want to tell the person you’re calling.

2. Dial the phone number.

3. When someone answers, introduce yourself and ask for the person you’re calling. “This is (say your name), I need to speak to (say his or her name) right away. I’m having symptoms.”

4. Relax as much as possible if they put you on “hold.” Be patient, it may take a few minutes to find the person you’re calling.

5. Stick to the facts. Tell the person you’re calling exactly how you’re feeling and what’s happening. Be as specific as possible.

6. Write down everything you’re told to do. Don’t try to remember everything. Ask questions if you don’t understand something you are told to do. Read back what you’ve written to make sure it’s right. Then say “good-bye.”

7. Follow the instructions you’ve written down.
Managing Crisis and Emergency Situations

You may have been through many crisis and emergency situations. You may have wondered if there was anything you could have done to prevent those situations. Perhaps not. But now that you know what to expect, you can use that experience to prepare yourself for the next time. In fact, you may be able to handle these situations more easily in the future, and even prevent them.

The first step is to understand whether the situation is serious. An overview of the stages may help you recognize how close you may be to a crisis or emergency situation and things you can do to prevent it. Great detail about each stage will follow.

Stage One: Attitude Changes

In this stage, you may notice abrupt changes in your attitude and behavior. You may eat or sleep irregularly, smoke more than usual, or skip doses of medication. These are all clues that you may be getting into trouble.

This stage is a “pre-crisis” stage – it’s a good time to alert the doctor so you can take action to avoid a crisis situation.

Stage Two: Early Warning Symptoms

Early warning symptoms are a signal that a crisis is about to occur. Your goal now is to keep the early warning symptoms from developing into a crisis.

Stage Three: Crisis

Early warning symptoms often develop into a crisis, and relapse may occur if Crisis Prevention isn’t used or isn’t effective. Start Crisis Intervention as soon as the crisis
occurs. Get professional help as soon as possible. Your goal is to avoid an emergency situation.

Stage Four: Emergency

If Crisis Intervention isn’t used, or isn’t effective, the crisis usually gets worse over time. Without effective management, the crisis can escalate to an emergency – you may start losing control and doing things that can be dangerous. Your goal is to get immediate professional help in order to prevent harm and/or injury.

Stage Five: Closure

Once the emergency is over, it’s time to watch for an opportunity to get closure. Getting closure after an emergency helps mend relationships and relieve tension. Skipping this stage is likely to damage the relationships of the people who went through the emergency. Your goal is to heal.
Risk Factors for Crisis

What risk factors have led to a crisis situation or caused you to be sick before?

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What other risk factors do you think may lead to a crisis for you?

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Managing Stressful Situations

Stress can affect the way you’re feeling. It’s important to find ways to keep your stress at a comfortable level because too much stress can eventually lead to a crisis. There are many things you can do to relieve stress and help yourself feel better. Here are some ideas.

Exercise

Light physical activity can help relieve stress. Talk with your doctor before starting any exercise program. Walking is good exercise. You can do it almost anywhere and at any time. You can walk with someone or by yourself and you don’t need equipment. You don’t have to walk far. Start out slowly and walk a little more each day. One way you can start walking to relieve stress is:

☐ Walk to your mailbox and back.

☐ The next day, walk to the house or building next door and back.

☐ Next, walk to the end of your block and back.

☐ When you feel ready, walk around the corner and back, or even around the block.

☐ Take a break when you don’t feel like walking.

What other activities would you like to do when you feel stressed?
Organize Your Time

Stress can happen when you don’t feel like you have enough time, or if you have too much time. Feeling rushed for an appointment or waiting a long time for a bus can be stressful. But there are things you can do to reduce your stress. Here are some ideas that people use to manage their time better and reduce stress:

☐ “I buy things I use often before I run out – like batteries, stamps, and bus tokens. That way, I can avoid feeling rushed at the last minute.”

☐ “I give myself a few extra minutes to get where I’m going so I don’t feel rushed.”

☐ “When going someplace where I know I will have to wait, like my doctor’s office, I always take a book or some needlework to pass the time.”

What are some things you can do to plan ahead?

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What could you do while waiting at the doctor’s office to make the time pass quickly?

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Deep Breathing Exercises

When you feel stressed, deep breathing exercises can calm you down and help you feel better. Here is a deep breathing exercise you can do anywhere. All it takes is a few minutes, and you can do it as often as you like.

1. Sit or stand with your shoulders and back comfortable and straight. Put your hands on your stomach.

2. Take a slow, deep breath through your nose. Feel the air going to every part of your body. Feel your stomach expand and you breathe in.

3. Hold your breath for a few seconds before letting it out. Then breathe out slowly though your mouth. Feel the air leaving your body. Feel your stomach go down as you breathe out.

4. Start again by slowly breathing in through your nose, holding your breath for a few seconds, and breathing out through your mouth.

5. Do this four or five times, then sit or stand quietly for a minute.

What are some other things you can do to avoid a crisis?

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Taking Control of Your Life

Everyone has a limit to what they can do and what makes them feel comfortable. Below is a list of statements that can help you feel more relaxed in your life. Which ones are right for you?

“I feel more comfortable when I…

☐ do only one thing at a time instead of doing everything at once.”

☐ avoid people, places, and things I feel uneasy about.”

☐ do something new when I feel up to it.”

☐ keep my sense of humor.”

☐ break big tasks into small, easy-to-handle parts.”

☐ ask for what I need without being afraid.”

☐ solve my problems while they’re still small.”

☐ spot early warnings of a possible crisis a do something about it right away.”

☐ celebrate a success every day.”

Remember that setbacks are also a part of life. Stay focused on your successes and your goals. What other things can you do to take control of your life?
Making a Crisis Prevention Plan

When things are quiet and calm, it’s a good time to plan what to do if a crisis should occur. Having such a plan will make it easier for you to know what to do if you have a problem. It’s a good idea to create your crisis plan with the people you plan to call if you need help. You’ll get more ideas by making everyone a part of the plan.

1. Which of my early warning symptoms require a quick response?

2. Whom should I call first if I need help?

3. Who will call and stay in touch with my doctor, nurse, or therapist if I can’t do it myself?
4. What should I do when I feel out of control?

5. Sometimes, the hospital can’t give any information to the people who are helping me. Can we set up a plan ahead of time with my treatment team so that information can be given to the people who are helping me?

Write your plan here:
This booklet is provided to you by the Steps of Hope Program of Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (Community Care). Community Care, part of the UPMC Insurance Services Division, is a non-profit recovery-oriented behavioral health managed care company that manages behavioral health services for nearly one million members.