



MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID

The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

Mental Health First Aid teaches a five-step action plan, known as ALGEE, for individuals to provide help to someone who may be in crisis.

- **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- **G**ive reassurance and information
- **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

When helping a person going through a mental health crisis, it is important to look for signs of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and/or non-suicidal self-injury.

Some Warning Signs of Suicide Include:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself
- Seeking access to means to hurt or kill oneself
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Feeling Hopeless
- Acting Recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or society
- Appearing agitated or angry
- Having a dramatic change in mood

**Always seek emergency medical help if the person's life is in immediate danger. If you have reason to believe someone may be actively suicidal, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Listen Nonjudgmentally

It may seem simple, but the ability to listen and have a meaningful conversation with an individual requires skill and patience. It is important to make an individual feel respected, accepted, and understood. Mental Health First Aid teaches individuals to use a set of verbal and nonverbal skills to engage in appropriate conversation – such as open body posture, comfortable eye contact and other listening strategies.

Give Reassurance and Information

It is important for individuals to recognize that mental illnesses are real, treatable illnesses from which people can and do recover. When having a conversation with someone whom you believe may be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness, it is important to approach the conversation with respect and dignity for that individual and to not blame the individual for his or her symptoms.

Mental Health First Aid teaches you helpful information and resources you can offer to someone to provide consistent emotional support and practical help.

Encourage Appropriate Professional Help

There are a variety of mental health and substance use professionals who can offer help when someone is in crisis or may be experiencing the signs of symptoms of a mental illness.

- Types of Professionals
 - Doctors (primary care physicians or psychiatrists)
 - Social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals
 - Certified peer specialists
- Types of Professional Help
 - “Talk” therapies
 - Medication
 - Other professional supports

The Mental Health First Aid course will provide you with a variety of local and national resources to connect individuals to care, if needed.

Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies

There are many ways individuals who may be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness can contribute to their own recovery and wellness.

These strategies may include:

- Exercise
- Relaxation and Meditation
- Participating in peer support groups
- Self-help books based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Engaging with family, friends, faith, and other social networks

For additional information on what you will learn in a Mental Health First Aid course, visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/what-you-learn/