

# Coping with Crisis



Family Mental Health Initiative

## What is Crisis?

When you hear the word crisis, what comes to mind? For most of us, our thoughts jump to the worst possible scenario - something we don't want to face or deal with. The dictionary defines crisis in two ways: 1. an unstable situation of extreme danger or difficulty; 2. a crucial stage or turning point in the course of something.

If the second definition is surprising to you, consider that the Chinese character for crisis is actually a combination of two words: Danger and Opportunity. We may not perceive a crisis as a way to grow, yet experience shows that people are

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incredibly resilient and crises can become powerful opportunities for creating change.

The other thing to remember is that we have a great deal of power and control over how we respond to different situations, even when we think we don't. Just consider that the way you frame a situation in your mind will help determine your response.

“Coping with Crisis” will discuss mental health crisis so the family is better able to understand and prepare for the future.

It can be an incredibly frightening experience to see your family member/friend in crisis or in the middle of a psychotic



*During crisis, the person experiencing the crisis and those supporting that person can feel so*

episode. It is important to prepare yourself and your family for this possibility.

## Signs of a Possible Crisis

- A sudden change in usual behaviour - your loved one can become paranoid or manic (very high energy)
- Extreme irritability
- Easily overwhelmed by almost anything
- Trouble talking, eating or sleeping
- Appear unresponsive, severely depressed and/or unable to care for themselves
- Acting or talking in ways that may lead to harm (to themselves or to others)
- Suicidal plans or thoughts being expressed
- Increase in risk-taking behaviour
- Exaggerated or dramatic behaviour
- Highly distracted and/or easily confused

Series 2 of 15

### Inside this issue:

Steps for Preventing Crisis	2
Our Crisis Toolbox	2
Preparing for a Crisis	3
Tips for Dealing with a Potentially Life-Threatening Crisis Situation	3
Things to Remember about the Crisis Line	3
Openers for Calling the Crisis Line	4
Crisis and the Risk of Suicide	4
Community Contacts and Resources	5
Local Family Support Groups	6





## Preparing for a Crisis

**Health Information Sheets** can help in a crisis. Make copies of a one page information sheet containing your loved one's history, medications, any hospitalizations, and what helps or frightens your family member/friend when they are struggling acutely. This can be given to the health care providers and will help in the case of an emergency.

**Crisis Planning** can be immensely helpful. Develop the Crisis Plan during a period of stable mental health, so that if

your family member/friend goes into crisis, there is already something in place. Developing a Crisis Plan will include your loved one documenting what actions he/she would and would not want taken in a crisis situation, ways to help themselves and resources he/she can access (like the Crisis Line). The family can write a Crisis Plan together with their family member/friend, so that everyone is knowledgeable. A Crisis Plan will often be created with the assistance of social worker or support worker.

*“Make copies of a one page information sheet containing your loved one's medical history, medications, any hospitalizations and what helps or frightens your family member/friend.”*

### Tips for Dealing with a Potentially Life-Threatening Crisis Situation

- Remain Calm - Call 911 if you have to help your loved one in crisis.
- When calling in a crisis, give as much information as possible to the dispatcher. **State that it is a mental health emergency.**
- Stay safe. Your personal safety has to come first or you will not be able to
- Remove objects from your family member/friend that could be used to inflict harm (knives, sharp objects, etc.)
- Make yourself aware of police powers under the Mental Health Act before something happens.

## Things to Remember About the Crisis Line

- The Crisis Services staff are there because he/she want to be.
- The Crisis Services staff have extensive training and experience with a range of issues.
- The Crisis Services staff can listen well, give you information and options of resources you can access for yourself, or put you through to talk to a professional if you are in immediate crisis.
- You can call everyday if you need to, or every couple of months - whenever you need the service it will be there.



*In a potentially life-threatening situation call 911*

## Openers for Calling the Crisis Line



*You can talk about anything when you call the Mental Health Crisis Line.*

You can talk about anything when you call the Mental Health Crisis Line. Sometimes it helps to talk about the weather or sports for a little while to get comfortable with the crisis line staff on the phone - just tell the crisis line staff you need to get grounded first before getting to the issue.

The Mental Health Crisis Line can be anonymous if

you want it to be - you don't have to give information about yourself. But, you can give that information if you want to.

### Openers

- I'm having a hard time so I just wanted to call and talk to someone.
- I am dealing with a lot of emotions and I'm not sure how to continue my day.

• I'm feeling pretty confused right now and need some help sorting things out in my head.

• I think I am showing symptoms of an illness.

• I've been awake all night and I need someone to talk to.

• I have never called and I don't know how to start.

## Crisis and the Risk of Suicide

**IF YOUR  
FAMILY  
MEMBER/  
FRIEND WONT  
ACCEPT HELP  
AND SAYS THEY  
WILL COMMIT  
SUICIDE**

**CALL 911**

People who talk about suicide usually do not really want to die, but are desperate for support. It is extremely important to **take any mention of suicide seriously** particularly if your family member/friend have been showing signs of other behaviours you are concerned about. Sometimes when there is a mental illness present, your loved one will hear voices telling he/she they should die.

If you think your family member/friend is in danger of attempting suicide, ask your loved one directly. **Don't be afraid to discuss it openly - it will not increase the chances of he/she dying by suicide.**

Try to make a **verbal contract** or agreement with

your family member/friend to not carry out their plan at least until a specified time (maybe two hours from that point). Assure he/she that you will not judge them, that you are there to support and get he/she through this rough time. Talk about the things your loved one feels overwhelmed about - **listen**, don't try to give too much advice or minimize their concerns.

The risk of suicide increases when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis. This is a very disorienting experience and your family member/friend may feel at the time that suicide is their only option for escape. Studies indicate that approximately 90% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental

illness. Suicide is the most common cause of death for individuals with schizophrenia. People diagnosed with mood disorders such as major depression, and bipolar disorder, are at particularly high risk as well, especially if they are not receiving treatment or formal support.

### Signs of Suicide Risk

- Talk about dying or saying final good byes
- Discussion of a plan to die
- Giving away possessions, taking out insurance, writing a will or other preparations for death
- A sudden and unexpected change in mood or behaviours - it could be extreme either way; hopelessness or euphoria
- A history of other family members dying by suicide



## Community Resources

### **Mental Health Crisis Line – Simcoe County/Muskoka**

Contact 705-728-5044 or 1-888-893-8333

### **Family Mental Health Initiative of Simcoe County**

Contact 705-725-0363 or 1-800-324-3252

Website: [www.fmhi.ca](http://www.fmhi.ca)

### **Canadian Mental Health Association, Simcoe County**

Contact 705-726-5033 or 1-800-461-4319

Website: [www.cmhasim.on.ca](http://www.cmhasim.on.ca)

### **Muskoka Parry Sound Community**

#### **Mental Health Services**

Contact 1-800-245-5036

Website: [www.mpscmhs.on.ca](http://www.mpscmhs.on.ca)

### **Community Mental Health Services – Collingwood**

Contact 705-444-6600

### **Mary McGill Community Mental Health Centre**

(South Simcoe) Contact 705-435-6281

### **My Friend's Place (South Simcoe)**

Contact 705-435-0054

### **Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene (MHCP)**

Contact 705-549-3181

Website: [www.mhcp.on.ca](http://www.mhcp.on.ca)

### **MHCP – Outpatient Services**

Contact 705-526-0567

### **MHCP– Georgianwood Concurrent Disorders Program**

Contact 705-549-3181 ext. 2122

### **Patient/Client & Family Council –MHCP**

Contact 705-549-3181 ext. 2181

### **Addiction Outreach Muskoka Parry Sound**

Contact 705-645-1311

### **Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital**

#### **Mental Health & Addiction Program**

Contact 705-327-9122 Website: [www.osmh.on.ca](http://www.osmh.on.ca)

### **Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH)**

#### **Mental Health & Addiction Program**

Contact 705-728-9802 ext. 47234

Website: [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca)

### **RVH – Mental Health Support Services**

Contact 705-728-9090 ext. 24300

### **RVH – Withdrawal Management Services- Detox**

Contact 705-728-9090 ext. 24100

### **Simcoe Outreach Services**

Contact 705-726-7062

Website: [www.simcoeoutreach.org](http://www.simcoeoutreach.org)

### **Seven South Street Treatment Centre**

#### **Men's Residential Addictions (Orillia)**

Contact 705-325-3566

### **Wendat Community Programs**

Contact 705-526-1305

### **Consumer/Survivor Project in Collingwood**

Contact 705-444-1844

Website: [www2.georgian.net/~csp](http://www2.georgian.net/~csp)

### **Council of Consumer/Survivor & Family Initiative (Muskoka)**

Contact 1-800-245-5036

### **Enahtig Healing Lodge & Learning Centre**

Contact 705-534-3724

Website: [www.enahtig.ca](http://www.enahtig.ca)

### **B'saanibamaadsiwin – Native Mental Health (Muskoka)**

Contact 705-746-2512

### **Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County**

Contact 705-726-2503

Website: [www.cfssc.ca](http://www.cfssc.ca)

### **Catholic Family Services North Simcoe**

Contact 705-526-9397

### Contact Us

151 Essa Road, Suite 202  
Barrie, Ontario  
L4N 3L2

Phone: 705-725-0363  
Toll Free: 1-800-324-3252  
Fax: 705-725-5496



**Family Mental Health  
Initiative**

### Our Mission

To provide support through education, training and referral to the family members of those individuals with serious and persistent mental illness difficulties. This will enable those families to adequately fulfill their roles in relationship to their family member or members, the mental health system and the community.

### Visit Our Lending Library

Information specific to family members, friends and supporters regarding coping, supporting and understanding mental illness, addictions and recovery. The lending library is located at 15 Bradford Street in Barrie. The library includes a variety of resources such as books, videos, audio tapes and pamphlets.

## Local Family Support Groups

#### **Barrie Family & Friends Mental Health Support Group:**

Date: Second Tuesday of every month

Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Location: 350 Grove St., East in Barrie  
(Grace United Church)

#### **Midland Family & Friends Mental Health Support Circle:**

Date: First Thursday of every month

Time: 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Location: 334 King Street in Midland  
(HERO Centre - Our Place Social Club)

#### **Collingwood Family & Friends Mental Health Support Group:**

Date: Last Thursday of every month

Time: 10am - 12pm

Location: 12 Erie Street in Collingwood  
(Consumer Survivor Project)

#### **Orillia Family Support Group:**

Date: Third Wednesday of every month

Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Location: 76 Nottawasaga Street in Orillia

#### **Midland Parents Support Group**

Date: Second Wednesday of every month

Time: 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Location: 9292 County Road 93 in Midland  
(Real Canadian Superstore - Community Room)

#### **Barrie Parents Support Group**

Date: Third Tuesday of every month

Time: 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Location: 211 Marsellus Dr.

(Holly United Church - Downstairs)

#### **Barrie Chapter of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario Family Support Group**

Date: Last Thursday of every month

- Except Wednesday, March 31, 2010
- No meeting in July, August and December 2010

Time: 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Location: 60 Worsley St.

(Barrie Public Library - Georgian International Room)

#### **Parents for Children's Mental Health - Simcoe County**

Date: Last Thursday of every month

Time: 5:30pm - 7:00pm — Pot Luck Dinner

Location: 165 Ferris Lane in Barrie

(The Common Roof)

#### **Survivors of Suicide Support Program**

Is a support group for persons experiencing the death of a loved one through suicide. The program consists of 8-10 week sessions, facilitated by trained volunteers. Topics covered include informal conversations and a sharing of experiences in a safe environment. In-depth counseling is not part of this program. Talking and connecting with others who understand can be helpful. For more information or to enroll please contact: Bernadette at 705-326-9941 or Dianne at 705-327-5970.