



How to Help Someone in Crisis

**Pima County Attorney's Office
Victim Services Division**

Contact us Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(520) 740-5525

What is a crisis?

We often think of a crisis as a sudden unexpected disaster; however, crises can range substantially in type and severity. Whether it is the result of a crime, major incident, or one of life's many challenges, everyone experiences crisis reactions at one time or another. Some situations may require special knowledge and action and it may be best to seek professional assistance. However, every crisis experience will be facilitated by the following tips included in this pamphlet.

If an individual is suicidal, or wants to hurt him/herself or others, it is imperative to access professional assistance immediately. Call 911.

Ways to help ease someone's reactions to crisis

Unless there is a physical injury, have the person in crisis drink room temperature water. The body quickly dehydrates during a crisis due to crying, perspiration, and chemical reactions inside the body. Cool or room temperature water is quickly and easily absorbed. Ice water will give a traumatized person stomach cramps. Stimulants like caffeine, or sugared, carbonated, or alcoholic beverages are not helpful.

Get the person moving – walk, perform a simple task, or any kind of exercise. This helps various body systems return to normal. Allow the person to cry and vent. Do not hand someone a tissue. This stops the flow of tears. Rather, have tissues nearby and let the person reach for one when ready to do so.

The importance of active listening

Encourage the person to talk while you listen. Just talking, even if it is not logical, is helpful for sorting things out and making sense of the occurrence. Avoid making judgments or giving advice. Just listen and be present. Don't use clichés or try to point out positive aspects of a tragedy. This diminishes the impacts of the reactions the person is experiencing and is not helpful.

Empower victims and survivors to make their own decisions

- Let them make small choices. This is not the time to make major life decisions, but making small choices can help a person start to regain a sense of control.

- Ask how you can be helpful. Don't assume what works for you, will work for another.
- Rather than "take care of" the person, encourage the person to do things for him or herself if capable.
- Provide accurate information. If you are uncertain, do not pass along guesses or misinformation. This can make a situation much worse.
- Predict and prepare. Help the person identify what may happen next and how to cope. This is especially important if a person witnessed a traumatic incident or was a direct victim. Processes out of the person's control will be much easier to cope with if the person is well-informed and prepared.

Finding help for someone in crisis

Get assistance and counsel from professionals. Several community resources are listed below and trained professionals are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Remember, if someone is suicidal, or wants to hurt him or herself or others, it is imperative to seek professional assistance immediately. Call 911.

Important phone numbers

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|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Emergency | 911 |
| Help On-Call | (520) 323-9373 |
| SAMHC (24-hr. Crisis, Mental Health) | (520) 622-6000 |
| SACASA (24-hr. Rape Crisis) | (520) 327-7273 |
| Red Cross | (520) 318-6740 |
| Wingspan (24-hr. LGBT) | (520) 624-0348 |



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