

# MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS VS MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

The signs of a mental health crisis or emergency differ from person to person. How can you differentiate between crisis and emergency in general? What can you do to help when it comes to suicide?

## What is the Difference?



### Crisis

- Time of intense difficulty or danger
- May or may not be urgent, important to step back, slow down
- Longer-term plan needed
- **Examples:** Pandemic, access to clean drinking water, 30 day eviction notice on the door, suicidal ideation



### Emergency

- Poses a serious and immediate risk to health, life or property
- Is urgent, important to act with immediacy
- Short term
- **Examples:** Heart attack, someone stops breathing, home burns down- no place to go, imminent risk of suicide

## What You Can Do To Help

In each situation, do your best to remain calm and grounded.

### Suicidal Ideation

In a mental health crisis, have a conversation with the client about what they are going through. They may have trouble verbalizing it, so just connect with them on a human level. Explore with them short term safety options, supports, and resources, and make a clear plan to connect again, along with a contingency plan.

### Imminent Risk of Suicide

For a mental health emergency (such as someone who is at imminent risk of severely hurting themselves), getting that person to the hospital is typically the best option. If you can find ways to get them to the hospital without calling 911, do so. If not, call 911 and remain with them until emergency services arrive. You may need to be an advocating voice for what the client needs, if they are not able to voice it themselves.

## Resources



### Websites

[Centre for Suicide Prevention](#)  
[Distress and Crisis Ontario](#)  
[Distress Centres of Greater Toronto](#)  
[Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention](#)



### Crisis Lines

**Crisis Services Canada 24/7/365:** Call 1.833.456.4566 | Text 45645  
**Good2Talk Helpline:** 1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868  
Ontario's 24/7 helpline for post-secondary students.  
**Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868  
**Hope for Wellness Help Line:** 1-855-242-3310: (Counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.)  
**Gerstein Centre (Toronto):** (416) 929-5200  
**Distress Centres of Greater Toronto:** Toronto area: 416-408-4357 Peel area: 905-459-7777  
**Suicide Crisis Helpline:** 9-8-8 (<https://988.ca/>)



For training on how to address suicidal ideation, join the training "Confronting Suicidal Ideation and High Risk Behaviour" provided by Elizabeth Scarlett MA, RP