

# Crisis Support and When to Seek Urgent Help

There are times when emotional distress becomes overwhelming and urgent support is needed. This leaflet explains when to seek urgent help and what crisis support options are available.

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## What Is a Mental Health Crisis?

A mental health crisis is a situation where:

- Distress escalates rapidly
- Usual coping strategies are not enough
- Safety may be at risk

Crises can occur even in people who are engaged in treatment and are not a sign of failure.

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## When to Seek Urgent Help

You should seek **urgent support** if you experience any of the following:

- Feeling unable to keep yourself safe
- Suicidal thoughts becoming more frequent or intense
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others
- Feeling trapped, hopeless, or overwhelmed
- Severe agitation, panic, or emotional distress
- Hearing or seeing things that others do not
- Marked confusion or loss of touch with reality
- Significant substance use combined with distress

If you are unsure, it is safer to seek help.

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## Acting Early Matters

Seeking help early:

- Can prevent situations from escalating
- Often reduces the intensity and duration of distress

- Supports safety and recovery

You do not need to be “at breaking point” to seek crisis support.

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## Emergency Services

If there is **immediate danger**:

- **Call emergency services (000)**
- **Attend the nearest emergency department**

Emergency services focus on safety and support during high-risk situations.

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## Crisis Support Services (Australia)

The following services are available 24/7 and confidential:

- **Lifeline – 13 11 14**  
Support for crisis situations, suicidal thoughts, or overwhelming distress.
- **Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636**  
Support for depression, anxiety, and related distress.
- **Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467**  
Ongoing support during periods of high distress or suicidality.

You can call even if you are unsure what to say.

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## If You Are Already in Treatment

If you are under psychiatric or psychological care:

- Follow any safety plan discussed during appointments
- Seek urgent help if safety cannot be maintained
- Do not wait for your next scheduled appointment if risk increases

Crisis support complements ongoing treatment.

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## If You Are Concerned About Someone Else

If you are worried about another person:

- Take their distress seriously
- Encourage them to seek urgent help
- Stay with them if possible
- Contact emergency services if you believe there is immediate risk

Supporting safety is the priority.

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## What Happens After Urgent Help

After a crisis:

- Safety is stabilised first
- Follow-up care is usually arranged
- Treatment plans may be reviewed

A crisis does not mean long-term deterioration or loss of progress.

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## Common Concerns About Seeking Help

Some people worry that seeking urgent help will:

- Take away control
- Lead to judgement
- Cause unnecessary consequences

In reality, crisis services aim to **support safety**, reduce distress, and help you through the moment.

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## A Reassuring Message

Needing urgent support does not mean you have failed or that things will not improve. Crisis support exists to help during the hardest moments.

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## Summary

Seek urgent help when safety is at risk or distress feels unmanageable. Acting early, reaching out, and using crisis supports can save lives and support recovery.

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