

# Mental health crisis



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Tē Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis is a situation where someone's emotional or mental state poses an immediate and significant risk to their well-being or the safety of others, requiring urgent support.

A mental health crisis is not a general experience of distress but is similar to an emergency medical situation (e.g. a heart attack).

## Major signs of a person experiencing a mental health crisis can include:

- Expressing thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- Attempted suicide or self-harm
- Appearing disoriented, out of touch with reality, distracted and/or confused
- Behaving out of character (if the person is known to you)
- Significant changes in their mood and/or thoughts
- Appearing visibly distressed, tearful and/or agitated
- Illogical or irrational thoughts
- A resigned attitude
- Anti-social or disruptive behaviour
- Apparent over-reactions

## If someone is experiencing a mental health crisis:

- Call UniSafe on **07 838 4444 (Hamilton)** or **0800 WAIKATO, option 4** and let them know your location and the nature of the emergency
- Try to stay with the person until help has arrived
- Don't try to stop them leaving an area but consider following them at a safe distance
- Stay calm, listen non-judgmentally and provide appropriate emotional support
- Create a safe space and, if possible, remove any potential hazards or tools for harm to self or others
- Let the person know you care and make sure they feel comfortable and supported
- Ask the person what might be helpful for them and involve them in decision-making
- Seek advice from onsite health professionals. Contact Hauora Ākonga Student Health Service and ask to speak to a member of the Mental Health and Wellbeing team

## If there is no immediate risk of harm to self or others:

### Offer emotional support to the person by:

- Listening to their emotions and concerns non-judgmentally
- Identifying any immediate needs
- Staying calm and doing more listening than talking
- Respecting privacy and confidentiality
- Showing empathy and providing reassurance
- Providing any practical support if appropriate

### After a mental health crisis:

- Follow up care: Whether you were helping a person with a mental health crisis or were directly affected, you might want to follow up with a mental health professional for advice about taking steps to maintain your own mental health and wellbeing
- Debrief with a line manager or supervisor
- Practice self-care

### In all situations:

- Introduce yourself & role if not already known to the person
- Communicate directly and involve the individual in planning support/next steps where able
- Practice cultural safety
- If known, use correct pronouns (or ask if unknown)
- Respect privacy & confidentiality
- Ask for help from others if needed

### Support to reach out to:

#### STUDENT

Hauora Ākonga Student Health Service:  
**07 838 4037(Hamilton) or**  
**0800 WAIKATO, option 3**

Encourage them to contact a trusted family member or friend

Free text or call **1737** for 24/7 counselling

Waikato Mental Health Crisis Team  
**0800 505 050**

Bay of Plenty Mental Health Crisis Team  
**0800 800 508**

#### STAFF

Line Manager

EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)  
**0508 664 981**

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