

# Mental Health First Aid at a Glance: Quick Tips: ALGEE

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## **The Action Plan: Helping Someone in a Mental Health Crisis**

Mental Health First Aid teaches a five-step action plan for individuals to provide help to someone who may be in crisis. Called 'ALGEE,' the Mental Health First Aid action plan includes:

**Assess for risk of suicide or harm Listen nonjudgmentally Give reassurance and information Encourage appropriate professional help Encourage self-help and other support strategies Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm.** When helping a person going through a mental health crisis, it is important look for signs of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and/or non-suicidal self-injury.

**Listening Nonjudgmentally.** It may seem simple, but the ability to listen and have a meaningful conversation with an individual requires skill and patience. It is important to make an individual feel respected, accepted and understood. Mental Health First Aid teaches individuals to use a set of verbal and nonverbal skills to engage in appropriate conversation – such as open body posture, comfortable eye contact and other listening strategies.

**Give Reassurance and Information.** Individuals must recognize that mental illnesses are real, treatable illnesses from which people can and do recover. When having a conversation with someone whom you believe may be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness, it is important to approach the conversation with respect and dignity for that individual and to not blame the individual for his or her symptoms. Mental Health First Aid teaches you helpful information and resources you can offer to someone to provide consistent emotional support and practical help.

**Encourage Appropriate Professional Help.** A variety of health and behavioral health professionals and interventions can help when someone is in crisis or may be experiencing the signs or symptoms of a mental illness.

**Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies.** There are many ways individuals experiencing mental illness can contribute to their own recovery and wellness. These strategies may include: exercise, relaxation and meditation; participating in peer support groups; self-help books based on cognitive behavioral therapy; and engaging with family, friends, faith, and other social networks.