**Mental Health First Aid Strategies**

**How to help someone going through a mental health crisis**

**The Action Plan**

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

* **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
* **L**isten non-judgmentally
* **G**ive reassurance and information
* **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
* **E**ncourage 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.

Some Warning Signs of Suicide Include:

* Threatening to hurt or kill oneself
* Seeking access to means to hurt or kill oneself
* Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
* Feeling Hopeless
* Acting Recklessly or engaging in risky activities
* Increased use of alcohol or drugs
* Withdrawing from family, friends, or society
* Appearing agitated or angry
* Having a dramatic change in mood
* **Listening Non-Judgmentally**
* It may seem simple, but the ability to listen and have a meaningful conversation with an individual requires skill and patience
* Make an individual feel respected, accepted, and understood
* Be aware of your verbal and nonverbal mannerisms (such as open body posture, comfortable eye contact and other listening strategies.
* **Give Reassurance and Information**
* Recognize and acknowledge 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
* Do not blame the individual for his or her symptoms
* **Encourage Appropriate Professional Help / Refer**
* There are a variety of mental health and substance use professionals who can offer help when someone is in crisis or may be experiencing the signs of symptoms of a mental illness
* Types of Professionals
  + Doctors (primary care physicians or psychiatrists)
  + Social workers, counselors, and other mental health  
    professionals
  + Certified peer specialists
* Types of Professional Help
  + “Talk” therapies
  + Medication / psychiatric
  + Crisis lines / Psychiatric Hospitals
* **Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies**
* The following are examples of strategies for individuals who may be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness can contribute to their own recovery and wellness.

These strategies may include:

* Exercise
* Relaxation and Meditation
* Participating in peer support groups
* Engaging with family, friends, faith, and other social networks
* Music
* Physical Activity – sports, yoga, etc