



Mental Health Matters: Coping with crisis

The best course of action is whatever will work best for you. What that looks like will be a response to our specific situation, preferences and what's available.

Our choices include whether or not we find the term 'crisis' meaningful and helpful, **but if you or someone you are caring for are struggling to cope with your experience, you will find some practical suggestions and available help listed below.**

We can all find ourselves struggling with distress and confusion, which may be painful and scary. We may not be able to make sense of what is happening, but things have added up to almost beyond what we know how to cope with. We may or may not see this as 'Crisis' but we feel overwhelmed and



sinking. Useful generalisations may be difficult to come by – but **Accepting** you are in difficulties and have a need for care is a first step then - try to keep it simple and focus on two things:

- 1. Don't panic**
- 2. Do prioritise: staying safe – then responding to what's happening**

This may sound obvious and simple but in a 'crisis' we may struggle to do either. It *is* scary, but panic makes everything worse and strengthens the feeling that we are out of options, out of control, heading for trouble ... even disaster. It becomes easier to not panic if we can see or be supported in seeing that we are not alone, that there is help and there are alternatives.



But to see anything and find a way forwards we first need to stay safe ... so, what do you need, what does that person need to stay safe? *Whatever that is* ... that's your first priority ... which then creates space to consider how to deal with the crisis itself.

Panic also blinds us to options and alternatives. There may be a lot going on and we are not coping well but we need to pause, put down the busyness and prioritise dealing with what's happening. This may well mean focusing on looking after yourself or asking for help. **The good news is** that there is lots available if you know where to look and are willing to commit yourself to seeking appropriate support for yourself and others.

Locally, in Bradninch, in Devon we are well provided with services and resources but just like the complex web of underground utilities that keep our homes running, many of the health and care resources are invisible until we take a closer look. However, also like our utilities, some work better than others and navigating a crisis is seldom easy or predictable. What's needed, what's valued and helpful is personal and it can be really helpful just to talk about that with someone.

But there are at least six overlapping levels of response, a ladder of care, we can turn to when needing help:

be that support (1&2)

urgent care (3&4)

or a response to emergency (5&6):

1. Personal supporters: Many find their most effective support through their personal relationships - remember that friends, family and neighbours may not have the answers but may be very willing to listen, be supportive and help you find them.

This includes BradTog ... find your local coordinator at:
www.bradninctogether.org.uk/volunteers

2. Personal support services: The **Samaritans** are always there, 'Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.' Call **116 123** any time or email jo@samaritans.org and get a reply within 24hrs.

Mental Health Matters Devon (different to us!) provides trained support 24 hour, 365 days a year via their mental health helpline on **0800 4700317**. This is linked to our local services. They also provide **The Moorings** an out-of-hours drop-in and support service for anyone aged 16+ based on 3 sites in Devon including the St Leonards GP Practice in Exeter (www.mhm.org.uk/the-moorings-devon). Open: 6pm-midnight, Monday-Friday (including bank holidays) and 12pm-midnight, Saturday-Sunday. Phone first on **07990 790 820** or Email devonexeter.mhm@nhs.net

3. Health Services: Your GP and primary care team offer an access and doorway to the whole healthcare system.

Out of Hours medical services are covered by **Devon Doctors** **01392 824 600** or **08456 710270**

4. Crisis Services: the Devon Partnership NHS Trust say, 'If you are experiencing mental health distress or worried about someone else's emotional state, including children and young people - support is available through our Single Point of Access number **0300 555 5000**' ... (but be prepared to wait to get through at peak times).

Responses include the option of home visiting.

5. Emergency and need to get away from home: A&E departments are not ideal but do offer a skilled response to Mental Health emergencies and links with other resources

if you are not safe at home. Our nearest is at the RD&E in Exeter.

- 6. Emergency services in the community:** For urgent help in a community crisis where there are significant risks to safety – call ambulance and police **999**

And after a crisis – don't lose the learning

It may sound topsy-turvy but it's best to prepare for a crisis before it happens ... which is not realistic if this is a first ... but afterwards one of the best outcomes can be to reflect on it, learn from it and think what helped, what didn't and what would be helpful if this were to ever to happen again ... Some find it helpful to draw this up as a 'safety plan', maybe with help from someone you trust. This is a way of learning from your own experience, helping yourself feel safe again and enabling any future crisis to be less scary and confusing, for you and those around you, should that occur. If you'd like more info and guidance on that see here <https://stayingssafe.net/home>, as recommended by our local mental health NHS Trust.

Coping with crisis, is by definition a difficulty area to think about and we can only offer an outline sketch of where to turn. We can also learn a great deal from the stories of those who have come through such experiences, both what worked and what didn't ... and hopefully that's a conversation that is becoming more possible for us in Bradninch too.

Take care and with all good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

All details and contacts correct at 7.5.2021