



SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN CRISIS

HOW FRONTLINE WORKERS CAN BEST RESPOND TO
AND MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN THEIR
COMMUNITY



1. START THE CONVERSATION: Introduce yourself! Find out how the person likes to be addressed. Use open-ended, general questions and patience. Remember that building trust takes time.



2. USE COMFORTING BODY LANGUAGE: Make appropriate eye contact. Use an open stance — no crossed arms — and maintain physical distance as needed.

TIP: Eye contact can be an important way of connecting if you are wearing a mask.



3. USE A CALMING VOICE: Speak gently, warmly, and slowly — and only as loud as you need to. Explain to them why you're there. If appropriate, suggest a move to a quieter area.



4. GATHER INFORMATION: Keep questions simple and brief, and only pose them after establishing some familiarity with the person. When a person responds, summarize their answers back so it's clear you understand.

TIP: If a person doesn't feel like talking right now, offer another time.



5. ATTEND TO PRESSING NEEDS FIRST: Ask what they're needing and listen actively and without judgment. Prioritize getting them access to food, water, warmth, hygiene, or medical attention.



6. ENCOURAGE POSITIVE COPING: Ask about successful ways they cope. If their coping strategies don't align with the shelter rules, offer some alternatives (deep breathing, fresh air, body scans, etc.).



7. HELP THEM CONNECT TO OTHERS: Inquire about who or where they go to for support and make introductions to other shelter residents or staff members who may be good touchstones for them.



8. LINK THEM TO RESOURCES: Know what relevant medical, mental health, or community supports are available right now. Make sure they have that information, and facilitate them accessing those supports as best you can.

For more information, visit pmhp.ucla.edu/guides