

NAMI Support Group

Emergency Procedure Instructions

Is There Immediate Physical Danger?

Is there immediate physical danger, due to a medical emergency or threats by an individual? If so, call 911 immediately.



Important: A medical emergency constitutes any condition which requires immediate attention by a licensed professional. Under no circumstances should you or anyone in the group transport the person in danger to a health center or anywhere else. Call 911 immediately.

Examples of a medical emergency include, but are not limited to:

- Fainting
- Chest pain
- Profuse bleeding
- Diabetes related issues
- Alcohol or drug overdose
- Sweating with nausea and vomiting
- Seizures
- Numbness/paralysis



Important: If you are in doubt, **make the call.**

If Someone is Extremely Distressed, Ask:

Is the Hot Potatoes Process Complete?

Ideally, the Hot Potatoes process would be completed before moving into Support Group Emergency Procedures. The Hot Potatoes Process can calm a potentially dangerous situation and keep it from becoming an emergency.

Is the Individual Still Distressed?

If you observe that someone is still distressed, one of the facilitators can gently ask the individual to step outside, if they feel safe doing so. Generally participants are able to

relax and calm down when they are alone with a facilitator. Give the participant the option of returning to the group or leaving early to return next time. If you are concerned about the person going home alone, ask if there is someone that they can call, or have a crisis hotline number on hand to share with that individual.

Remember, we are not professionals and no one expects us to diagnose or to assess risk. We are expected to use common sense and do what is reasonable to keep ourselves and others safe.

If a Group Member is Having Suicidal Thoughts

If a group member reports having suicidal thoughts, remember the PMT response. Do they have a **P**lan, the **M**eans (or method), a **T**ime frame? One question leads to the other here. A “no” at any point, or a time frame far in the future, means that we can relax a bit. It is always important for us to remain calm. Many of us have considered suicide and it is important to take every person seriously. If a person admits to having a plan, knows how they would carry it out and has decided on a date or time, then call 911. Let the person know that you are very concerned for them and want to see them get the help they need.

If the Person Says ‘No’ to Having a Plan, Means or a Time:

Listen deeply. Many times the need is simply to be heard. Affirm the individual. “You really love your family” or “It sounds like you worked really hard for...”

Identify Support

Is there anyone in the group who the person trusts and can rely on? What other support do they have in their lives? Some need reminding – someone in your family? In NAMI? At church? At work? In your clubhouse? etc. Once they have identified a support person, ask them if they would be willing to contact that person. Gently get a commitment as to when, where and how they will get in touch. Connection is truly a healing step on the path to recovery.

Debrief Afterward

This is a critical step. Helping someone else through a traumatic time can be upsetting for anyone and it can trigger our past traumatic times. Telling someone else what happened, how you felt and what your concerns are, allows you to discharge that energy rather than allowing it to build up. Debrief with your co-facilitator, and if you feel the need, check in with your NAMI state program director or NAMI Affiliate contact for support.