

Emotional Wellbeing in a crisis

Poverty Alliance members told us they increasingly see people accessing their services experiencing crisis and hardship. Often, in times of crisis, people face financial hardship, making it difficult to afford necessities like food and heating. They also face relationship breakdowns, housing issues, and increased social isolation. We were also told that people face new or increased worries because of the cost-of-living crisis.

We heard that people can find it much harder to regulate their emotions during times of crisis or distress. Uncertainty, worries and factors out of their control can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of being alone and unsupported, and staff and volunteers wanted to feel more confident supporting people.

People in poverty are disproportionately affected by crisis and are more likely to experience hardship and vulnerability, affecting their well-being. Financial insecurity, housing problems, and food poverty can be causes of crisis, but also experiences of personal trauma, violence, substance abuse, or exploitation by others are more prevalent for people in poverty.

Our helpful tips for emotional well-being in a crisis.

Be a calming influence: In times of crisis, it can be difficult for people to settle and focus on one thing. All their problems can seem amplified and become overwhelming.

Reassure the person that their feelings are "normal" responses to extreme circumstances.

Try to slow things down, offer the person a cup of tea and a seat. Slowing your breathing and speaking more slowly can help others slow down.

Pause and Reflect: Help the person recognise that they may be thinking about the worst-case scenario or trying to tackle everything simultaneously.

Encourage them to pause and ask them what the priority is right now.

Encourage breathing exercises: There are many different breathing techniques which some people find helpful.

Encouraging them to take a moment to take some deep breaths when things get too much can be beneficial.

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Ask about sleep: It's natural to experience more disturbed sleep in a crisis. Encourage healthy sleeping routines; don't try to force sleep. Getting up and doing something until they feel tired is better than tossing and turning in bed.

Connect with others: Encourage reaching out to supportive friends and family. Whilst recognising this may not be possible or reasonable in every situation during a crisis.

Seek professional help: Encourage the person to seek medical or professional help when appropriate.

Resources and Support:

Sleepio: A digital sleep improvement programme based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It's clinically proven to help address the root causes of poor sleep and insomnia. Sleepio is structured into six 15 to 20-minute CBT sessions. You can use Sleepio on your web browser or download the Sleepio app for iOS and Android devices.

To access this course, you need to provide the first half of your postcode and an email address.

www.sleepio.com/sleepio/nhsinform/333#1/1

Scotland's Mental Health First Aid: Participants develop skills in asking appropriate questions, listening without judgment and giving guidance about where help can be found. SMHFA courses are run all over Scotland year-round. <https://www.smhfa.com/>

Living Life is a free phone service offering therapy for anyone in Scotland aged 16 and over with Low mood, anxiety or depression. Living Life offers phone support using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques—self-referral for an assessment by phoning 0800 328 9655. The phone service is open Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 9 pm.

Breathing Space: is a free and confidential phone service for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 feeling low, depressed or anxious. Phone 0800 83 85 87 (6 pm to 2 am, weekdays and 24 hours at the weekend). Calls are free from landlines and mobiles.