

Beyond the Badge

Mental Health Education for Law Enforcement

*Trigger warning: This contains sensitive content regarding mental health

Introduction

Hello! My name is Audrey Verge and I am currently a psychology student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Upon graduation, I will be entering the law enforcement career field. I think that it is increasingly important that those who work in this field get proper training on mental health and de-escalation techniques considering that almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the population struggle with mental health. This packet provides some basic information about this topic.

Kahoot!

To start, I have made a Kahoot with some mental health trivia. This is a great way to see what you know, can learn, and open your eyes to the topic. Click the link to host, then have everyone join! You can play as individuals or in teams. Explanations for each answer are further in the packet. <https://tinyurl.com/5fjejfu4>

Follow-Up

After completing the Kahoot, how do you feel you did? What surprised you, or felt like useful information? More on de-escalation techniques and a review of the Kahoot questions can be found on the next pages.



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De-Escalation Techniques

De-escalating a conflict or mental health crisis helps reduce the intensity of a situation. It is important to be knowledgeable of these techniques because it can prevent additional conflict or trauma that the person may be experiencing. Most often, those going through a mental health episode do not get violent, so unless you feel you are at risk, these strategies help reduce symptoms and avoid adding stress to the situation.

Before engaging, read body language. Oftentimes, it is difficult to express how you are feeling or communicate effectively during a crisis, so being able to read and respond to non-verbal cues is important. Here is a short list of ways to recognize distress using the STAMP tool. These, along with noticing changes in behavior, can help you identify potential tension.

S: Staring

T: Tone

A: Anxiety

M: Mumbling

P: Pacing

Examples

1. Acknowledge and respect personal space
 - Avoid crowding the individual
 - Maintain a safe distance
2. Engage empathy and reserve judgement.
 - Take in information quickly
 - Try to understand their situation
 - Do not convey any judgement.
3. Maintain a calming presence.
 - Keep your presence and body language neutral
 - Use validating phrases such as “I understand”, “take your time”, etc.
 - Redirect negative comments
 - Avoid threats, ultimatums, etc. (Do not use force unless you absolutely need to)
 - Speak simply
4. Do not rush the situation
 - Time often helps defuse the tension

Sources:

“5 De-Escalation Techniques Police Officers Should Know.” *Axon.Com*,
www.axon.com/resources/de-escalation-techniques.

Pollack, Jeremy. “3 De-Escalation Techniques Essential for Mental Health Professionals - Defuse - de-Escalation Training.” *De*, 21 Feb. 2025, deescalation-training.com/2024/05/de-escalation-techniques-mental-health/.

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Common Mental Health Disorders and Their Symptoms

Disorder	Symptoms
Depression / Major Depressive Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persistent sadness or low mood - Loss of interest in activities - Fatigue and low energy - Changes in appetite or weight - Thoughts of hopelessness or suicide
Anxiety / Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excessive worry about various aspects of life - Restlessness or feeling “on edge” - Difficulty concentrating - Feeling overwhelmed
Bipolar Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Episodes of mania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High energy/impulsiveness/grandiosity/racing thoughts - Episodes of depression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sadness/low energy/loss of interest - Mood swings that affect daily functioning
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flashbacks about the traumatic event - Hypervigilance/being “on guard” - Emotional numbness or detachment - Irritability or angry outbursts
Schizophrenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hallucinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hearing or seeing things that aren’t there - Delusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - False beliefs not based in reality - Disorganized speech or behavior
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty with social communication - Repetitive behaviors or strict routines - Sensory sensitivities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To noise, lights, textures, etc. - Unusual responses to emotional situations
Substance Use Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued use of substances despite harmful consequences - Cravings and strong urges to use - Withdrawal symptoms when not using - Loss of control over amount used

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Conclusion

It is extremely important to be aware of mental health. You never know what someone is going through, and using these techniques can be useful in stressful situations. I have provided some helpful phone numbers if you ever find yourself in need of help, because as officers YOU need to take care of your mental health too! Ask your employer what their mental health resources and policies are.

MENTAL HEALTH & CRISIS RESOURCES





988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
24/7, free and confidential support, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones. Trained 988 operators provide immediate support, and referrals to mobile crisis teams or the 911 system as needed.
CALL: 9-8-8
TEXT: 9-8-8
CHAT: 988lifeline.org/chat
VISIT: 988lifeline.org

NAMI HelpLine
Trained peer volunteers offering information, referral resources, and support. M-F, 9am-9pm
CALL: 1-800-950-6264 (NAMI)
CHAT: nami.org/help
TEXT: "HELPLINE" to 62640
VISIT: nami.org/help

Crisis Text Line
Free, 24/7 support at your fingertips
TEXT: "HOME" to 741-741
CHAT: connect.crisistextline.org/chat
VISIT: crisistextline.org
APP: **WhatsApp:**
Text "HELLO" to 741741 or 443-SUPPORT for English
Text "HOLA" to 741741 or 442-AYUDAME for Spanish

SAMHSA National Helpline
24/7 Treatment, referral and information for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.
CALL: 1-800-662-4357 (HELP)
TTY: 1-800-487-4889
TEXT: Text your zip code or HELPAU to 435748.
VISIT: samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

211
Confidential assistance in finding resources in your area like housing, food, transportation and health care resources.
CALL: 2-1-1
VISIT: 211.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
Free, confidential, 24/7 support for those affected/involved with domestic violence.
CALL: 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)
TTY: 1-800-787-3224
TEXT: "START" to 88788
CHAT: thehotline.org
VISIT: thehotline.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Free, confidential 24/7 support, help, advice and resources.
CALL: 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE)
CHAT: online.rainn.org
VISIT: rainn.org

IL Helpline for Opioids & Other Substances
Public resource for finding substance use treatment and recovery services in Illinois.
CALL: 1-833-234-6343 (2FINDHELP)
CHAT: helplineil.org/app/home
TEXT: Text "HELP" to 833234
VISIT: helplineil.org

IL Warmline
Free support for emotional support, recovery education, self-advocacy support, and referrals. M-Sa, 8am-8pm, excluding holidays.
CALL: 1-866-359-7953
TTY: 1-866-880-4459
VISIT: illinoismentalhealthcollaborative.com

Call 911

If there is immediate danger to you or someone else.

Let dispatcher know the crisis is a mental health crisis .	Ask for a mobile crisis team and/or a CIT-trained officer (Crisis Intervention Team).	Give necessary mental health information on individual/situation.
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Information presented by the SIU Medicine Farm Family Resource Initiative and NAMI Illinois.

MENTAL HEALTH & CRISIS RESOURCES





The Trevor Project for LGBTQ Youth
24/7, free and confidential support from a crisis counselor.
CALL: 1-866-488-7386
TEXT: "START" to 678678
CHAT: thetrevorproject.org/get-help
VISIT: thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline
Confidential peer support services run by trans people for trans and questioning peers.
VISIT: translifeline.org
CALL: 1-877-565-8860 Option 2 for Spanish

LGBT National Hotline
Free, confidential peer-support, information and local resources.
M-F, 3pm-11pm | Sat, 11am-4pm
CALL: 1-888-843-4564
VISIT: lgbthotline.org

CARES (Crisis and Referral Entry Service)
Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS) program for children and adolescents who have publicly funded insurance and are in crisis.
CALL: 1-800-345-9049
TTY: 1-773-523-4504
VISIT: hfs.illinois.gov/medicalproviders/behavioral.html

Teen Line
A safe, confidential place to talk things out with another teen who can understand and will listen without judgment and provide helpful resources. 8pm-11pm
CALL: 1-800-852-8336
TEXT: "TEEN" to 839863
VISIT: teenlineonline.org

National Runaway Safeline
24/7 crisis connection with a trusted, compassionate person who will listen and help you create a plan to address your concerns.
CALL: 1-800-786-2929 (RUNAWAY)
CHAT: 1800runaway.org

National Grad Student Crisis Line
Free, confidential telephone counseling, crisis intervention, suicide prevention and information and referral services for graduate students provided by specially trained call-takers.
CALL: 1-877-472-3457 (GRAD-HLP)

Call Blackline
A space for peer support, counseling, reporting of mistreatment, witnessing and affirming the lived experiences of folks who are most impacted by systemic oppression with an LGBTQ+ Black Femme Lens. Prioritizes BIPOC community.
CALL: 1-800-604-5841
VISIT: callblackline.com
APP: **Apple's App Store® and Google Play™**

Farm and Rural Stress Hotline
24/7, free and confidential line to talk to a mental health professional to navigate whatever you may be experiencing.
CALL: 1-800-691-4336
VISIT: avera.org/services/behavioral-mental-health

Farm Family Resource Helpline
Confidential 24/7 Someone to talk to.
CALL: 1-833-327-6767 (FARMSOS)
TEXT: 1-833-327-6767 (FARMSOS)
EMAIL: farmfamilyresourcehelpline@mhsil.com
VISIT: siumed.org/farm

Call 911

If there is immediate danger to you or someone else.

Nearest Hospital: _____

Nearest Psychiatric Hospital: _____

Doctor's Name and Phone #: _____

Mental Health Provider's Name and Phone #: _____

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Kahoot Questions, Answers, and Explanations

1. True or False: The symptoms of a panic attack can be similar to a heart attack.
 - Answer: True
 - Explanation: Panic attacks can cause chest pain, shortness of breath, and fear. They are much more than just “worrying”.
2. Disorder Trivia: Which of the following could be a sign of schizophrenia?
 - Answer: Seeing or hearing things others do not
 - Explanation: Hallucinations and delusions are common symptoms of schizophrenia.
3. True or False: Most people with mental illness are violent.
 - Answer: False
 - Explanation: People with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators, and are often best approached with patience rather than force.
4. Disorder Trivia: Which behavior may signal a person with autism is overwhelmed?
 - Answers: Yelling or screaming, flapping hands or rocking, and avoiding eye contact
 - Explanation: Autistic individuals may show distress in non-traditional ways. This is a form of communication, not aggression.
5. True or False: It is smart to handcuff someone who may be having an episode, then question them.
 - Answer: False
 - Explanation: While force may be necessary in some scenarios, it is best to try to approach the situations with patience first, as force can further stress someone out.
6. Disorder Trivia: A person is pacing, speaking rapidly, and insists they are on an important mission. Which disorder is likely?
 - Answer: Bipolar - Manic Episode
 - Explanation: Bipolar disorder includes manic and depressive episodes. Manic episodes in bipolar disorder often involve excessive energy, grandiosity, and lack of sleep.

7. True or False: A person withdrawing from alcohol can die if they don't get medical treatment.
 - Answer: True
 - Explanation: Severe alcohol withdrawal can lead to seizures, hallucinations, and death. It is considered a medical emergency.

8. Which population is MOST at risk for suicide in the U.S.?
 - Answer: Veterans and first responders
 - Explanation: Veterans and first responders face higher suicide risks due to trauma exposure and stress.

9. True or False: A calm presence from an officer can slow a person's heart rate.
 - Answer: True
 - Explanation: People in distress often mirror the energy of those around them. Officer calmness can be contagious and can help reduce panic.

10. Disorder Trivia: Which disorder is often associated with flashbacks and hypervigilance?
 - Answer: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Explanation: People with PTSD often re-experience trauma and constantly feel "on-guard" for danger.

11. True or False: Talking about suicide with someone who may be suicidal will make them more likely to attempt it.
 - Answer: False
 - Explanation: Talking openly can provide relief and help the person feel less isolated, making it easier to get them help.

12. Disorder Trivia: A major symptom of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is:
 - Answer: Persistent and excessive worry about many things
 - Explanation: People with GAD often struggle to control worrying, with or without a reason and can interfere with daily functioning.

13. True or False: Mental health symptoms are always obvious during police encounters.
 - Answer: False
 - Explanation: Many individuals with mental health disorders can be internalized or not immediately visible to others.

14. Disorder Trivia: You arrive at a scene where a woman is saying she "can't go on anymore". What's an important step?
 - Answer: Stay with her, actively listen, and seek crisis support
 - Explanation: In a mental health crisis, immediate empathy and support can help prevent escalation and save lives.