



RESOURCE GUIDE

# Navigating a Mental Health Crisis

“Far too many young people are struggling with their mental health and unable to get the support they need. We all have a role to play in supporting youth mental health and creating a world where young people thrive.”

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy Surgeon General of the United States.

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## Our mission is to prevent youth suicide through education, cyber safety, and kindness campaigns.

*This guide was curated by Gabriel's Light to share critical information to support those experiencing a mental health crisis. We compiled information from leading mental health organizations to respond to common questions posed to Gabriel's Light by caregivers and parents.*

*Mental health challenges in children, adolescents and young adults are real and they are widespread. Most importantly, they are treatable and often preventable. It is important to understand that **you and your child are not alone**. Today's young people face unprecedented challenges: social media, COVID, climate change, income inequality, racial injustice, the opioid epidemic and gun violence. 1 in 3 high school students and half of female students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. 2.5 million youth in the U.S. have severe depression with multiracial, LGBTQ+ and females at greatest risk. 60% of youth do not receive any mental health treatment.*

*In 2018, we lost our son Gabriel to suicide to when he was just twelve years old. Our family was shattered by the loss, and we have faced our own mental health challenges. We did not know where to turn for help. Our experiences and the calls we received from others struggling were the motivator behind this resource guide.*

*In Gabriel's honor, in honor of all those who struggle with their mental health, and those lost to suicide, we work diligently through Gabriel's Light to prevent youth suicide through education, cyber safety, and kindness campaigns.*

*Remember, you are not alone. This is not your fault. Help is available.*

*With hope,*



*Carol Hufford Deely*

*President and Founder, Gabriel's Light*



# Advice for Coping with a Mental Health Crisis

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*We are pleased to provide this resource guide to help so many who are struggling. We regularly receive calls, emails and texts from parents experiencing a mental health crisis of their children or loved ones. Our family has navigated a variety of mental health challenges and Gabriel's Light works to support others with their difficulties.*

## **You are Not Alone**

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Unfortunately, there is still a stigma around mental health issues. Sometimes people feel shame or embarrassment, which may keep them from seeking the appropriate care. Almost a third of Americans suffer a mental issue in their lifetimes so you are not alone. The more we all talk openly about it, the better we can support those affected and their families. A free crisis counselor is always available by calling or texting 988.

## **Mental Health is as Important as Physical Health**

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Due to stigma and misunderstanding of mental health, some people feel it is not real or that those who are suffering can just “snap out of it.” Brains are organs and need care just as the rest of our bodies do. When considering how to manage a mental health issue, compare it in your mind to decision making around a chronic issue like diabetes or a diagnoses like cancer. We should take mental health issues as seriously as physical health issues.

## **Caregivers Need Their Own Support**

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Caring for someone, especially a child with mental health issues is stressful and can be scary, overwhelming and exhausting. Parents self-care is critical for both the parents and their children. Find resources on page 8.

## **Err On the Side of Caution**

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The consequences of not addressing a mental health crisis are so grave, we advise you to always err on the side of caution. Do not question warning signs or hope that things will “go away” or “it’s just a phase.” Help and treatment are available. Professionals, beginning with your pediatrician or primary care physician, can help determine how serious your situation is. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. It is always better to reach out for help than wish you had.

## **Parents Must Advocate for Their Children’s Mental Health Needs**

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Educating yourself on mental health before a crisis is extremely helpful. You will be glad you did in case of emergency. It is important that you serve as an advocate for your child or loved ones by seeking medical help and speaking with their school, doctor, therapist, psychiatrist, etc. Ensuring your child feels supported and communicates with you is vital. **Note:** When your child turns 18, they are considered an adult in the U.S. healthcare system. Your involvement is diminished unless your child signs a power of attorney form. (See [www.mamabearlegalforms.com](http://www.mamabearlegalforms.com))

## **Talking to Your Children About Mental Health is a Must**

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Regular communication about mental health and check-ins with your child will help you determine how to best care for them and how to know when you are in a crisis. We’ve included some tips below for communicating with your child.



# Immediate Resources

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## Assessing the Crisis

When a mental health crisis occurs, friends and family are often caught off-guard, unprepared and unsure of what to do. The behaviors of a person experiencing a crisis can be unpredictable and can change dramatically without warning. If you're worried that you or your loved one is in crisis or nearing a crisis, seek help. Make sure to assess the immediacy of the situation to help determine where to start or who to call.

## When To Call 911

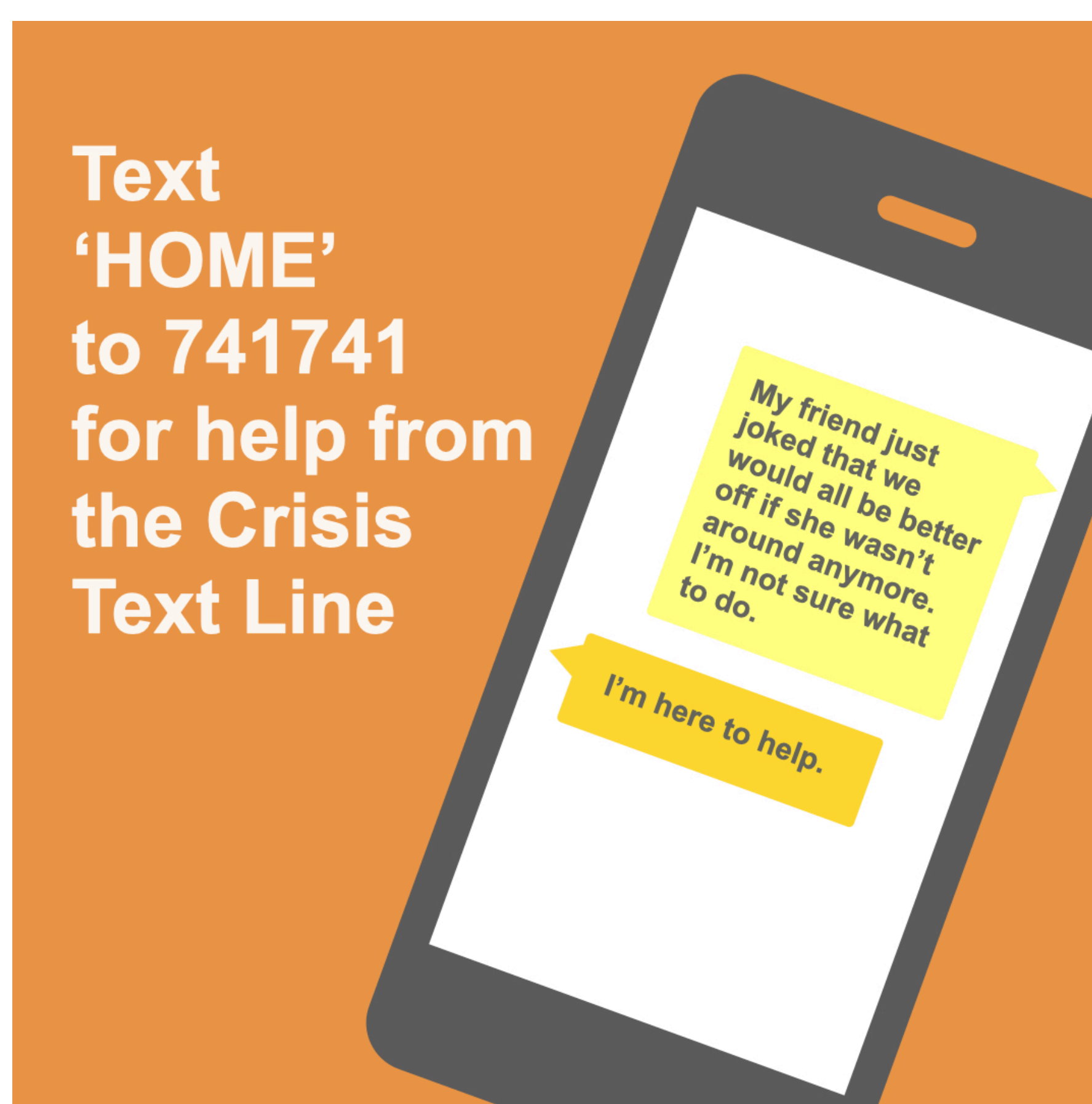
If the situation is life-threatening to self or others or if serious property damage is occurring, call 911. See page 9 of the NAMI guide (linked on the next page) for complete details.

## When Calling 911, Remember To

- ✓ Remain calm
- ✓ Explain that your loved one is having a mental health crisis and is not a criminal
- ✓ Ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) or Crisis officer, if available
- ✓ Ask your loved one to sign an authorization for release of medical information to you during the emergency evaluation or admission process. When your child turns 18, they are considered an adult in the U.S. healthcare system. Your involvement is diminished unless your adult child signs a power of attorney form. (See [www.mamabearlegalforms.com](http://www.mamabearlegalforms.com)) These need to be done in advance and kept in a secure place.

## If You Don't Know if 911 is Appropriate

- If the person in crisis has a therapist or psychiatrist contact them. If you do not get a response go to next step.
- **Call or Text 988** to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. It's open 24/7. A trained counselor will evaluate the situation with you over the phone or text and help with guidance on what to do. NOTE: if you Text 988, you will be asked to review privacy guidelines first. Then Respond YES to be connected to a counselor. Learn more at <https://988lifeline.org/>
- The **Crisis Text Line** is another resource for counselors and advice. Text HOME to 741741 to reach them and connect with a crisis counselor. Open 24/7.



Open 24/7

Free for everyone.

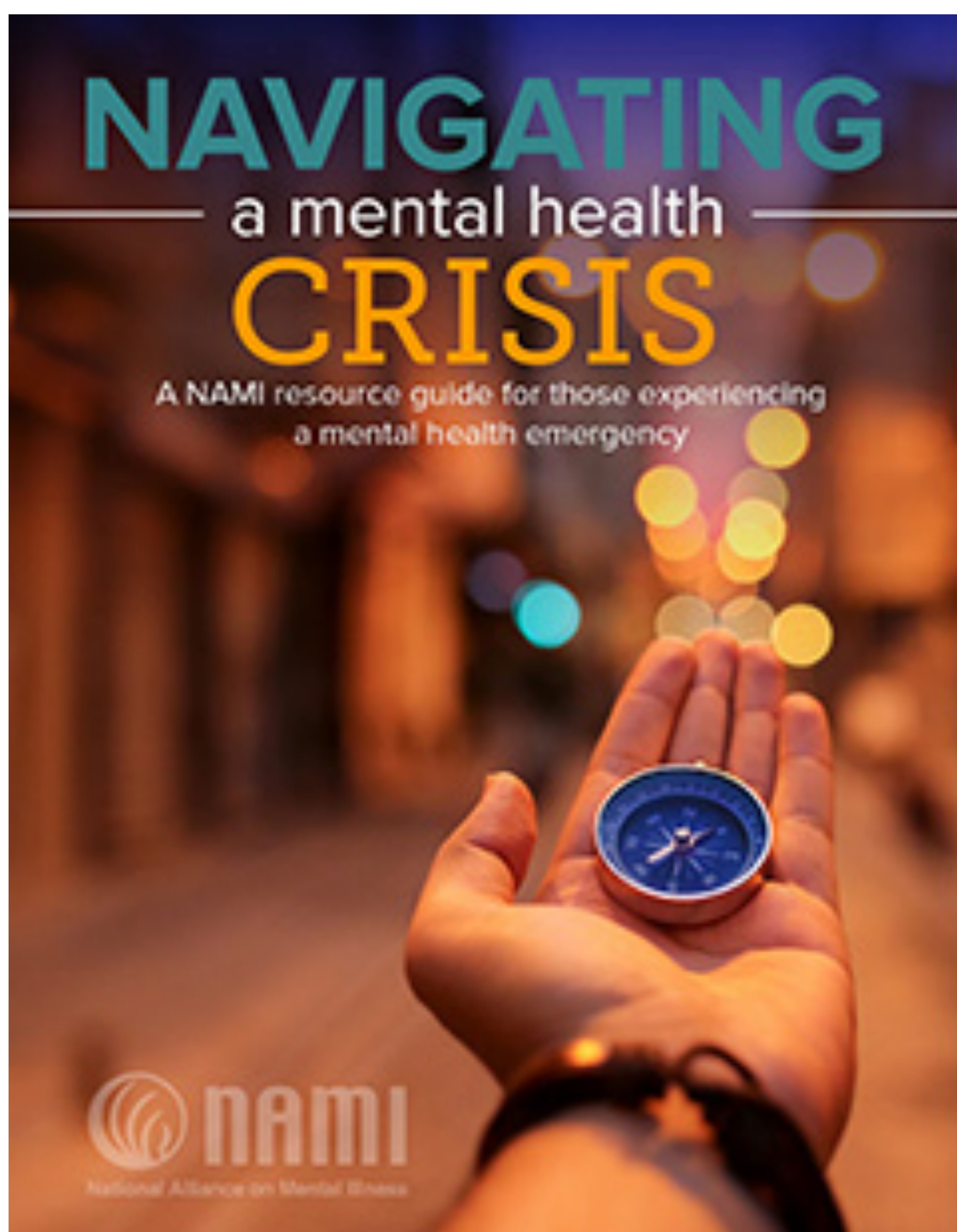
Counselors are available to guide you.



# Resources for Navigating a Mental Health Crisis

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*There are many resources and guides on how to navigate a Mental Health Crisis. We have curated those we have found to be most helpful.*



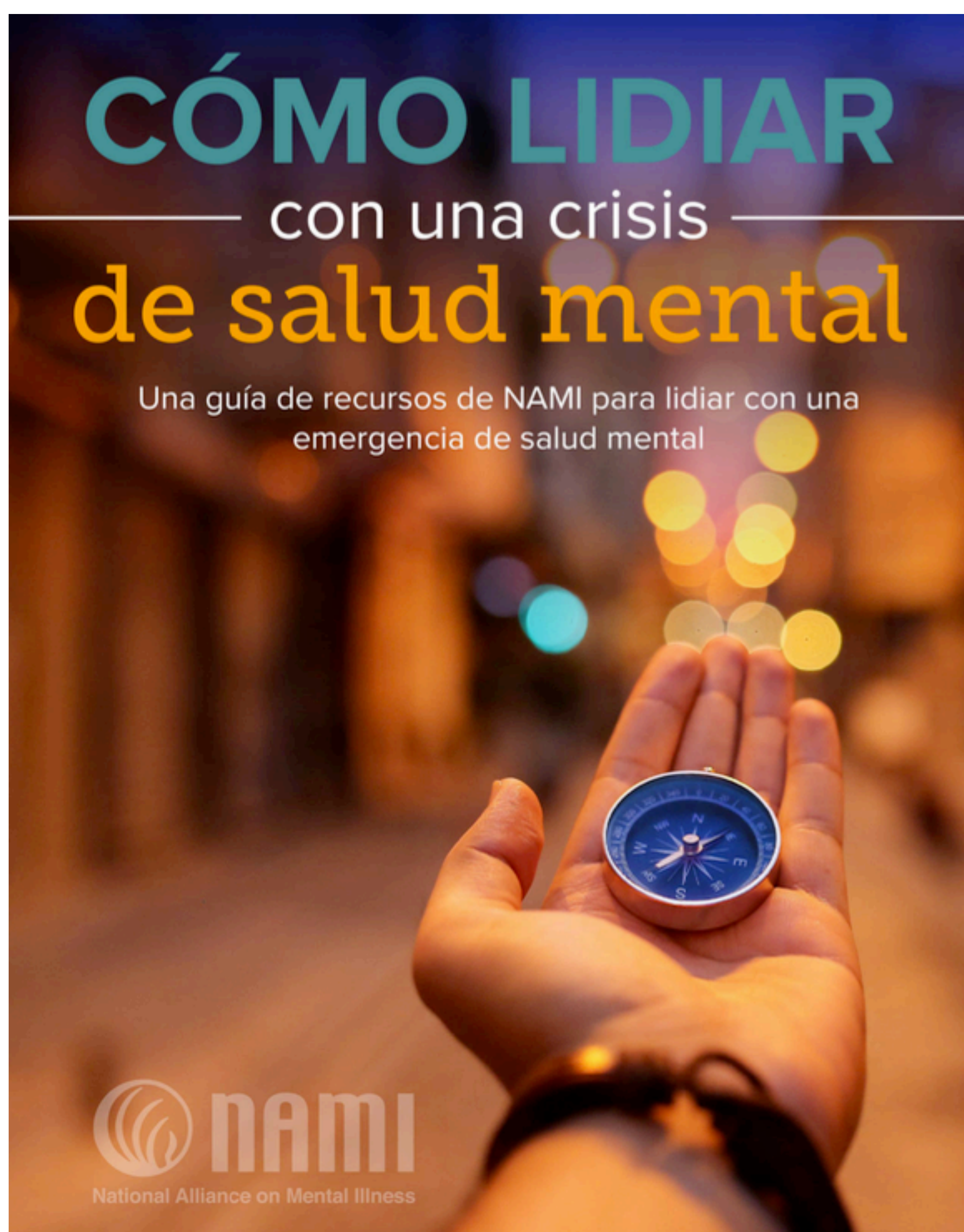
## **Navigating a Mental Health Crisis**

**A NAMI resource guide for those experiencing a mental health emergency.**

NAMI's detailed and comprehensive guide is a good place to start when determining your next steps. Their guide outlines what can contribute to a crisis, warning signs that a crisis is emerging, strategies to help de-escalate a crisis, additional resources, and more.

Download the Guide Here:

<https://nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis>



## **Cómo Lidar con una Crisis de Salud Mental**

**Una Guía de recursos de NAMI para lidiar con una emergencia de salud mental.**

Descarga Aquí:

[https://nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis/ESP\\_Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis.pdf](https://nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis/ESP_Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis.pdf)



# Resources for Navigating a Mental Health Crisis

NAMI also offers helpful 1-2 page informational guides on targeted topics.



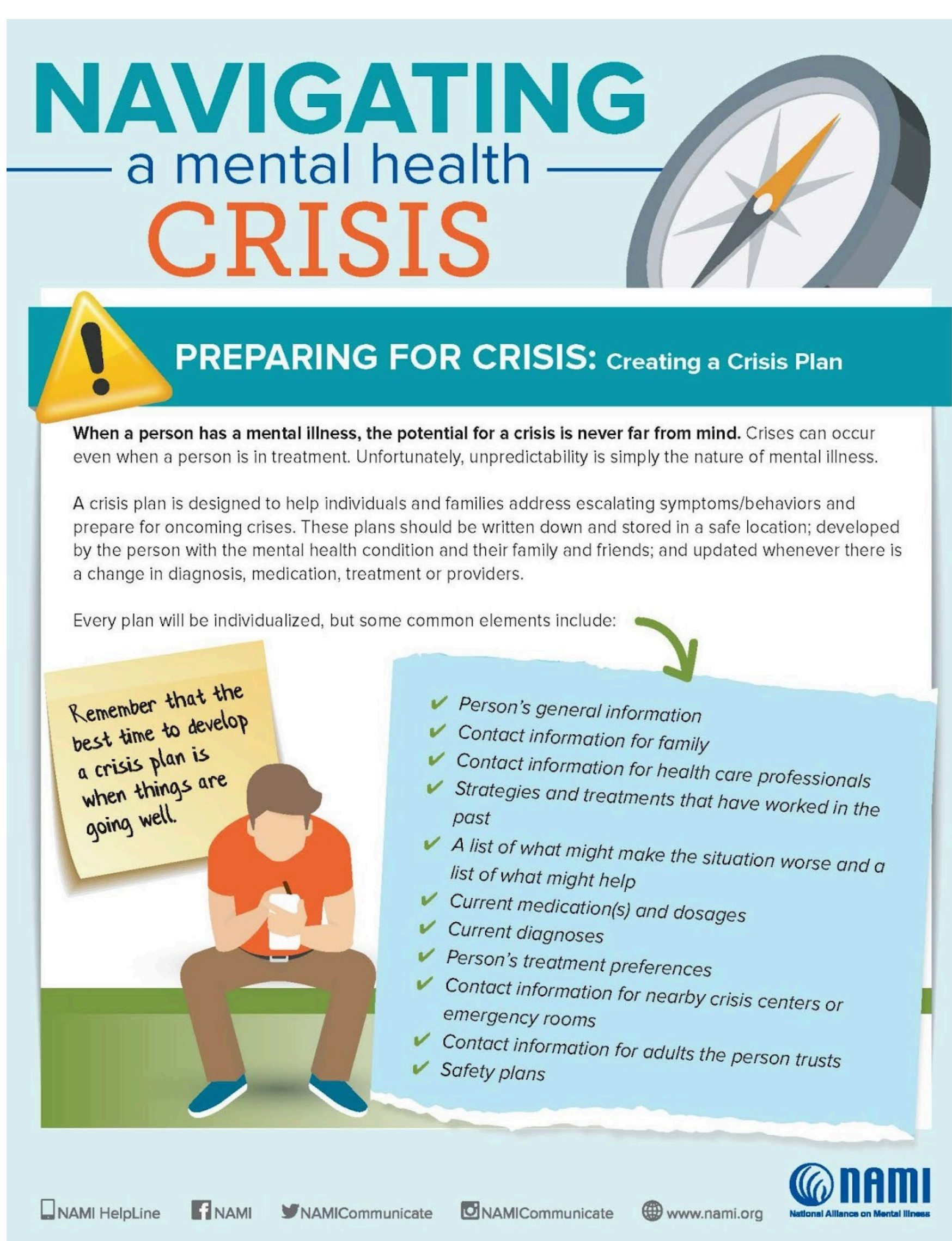
## Warning Signs of a Mental Health Crisis & What to Do/ Signos de Alerta de una Crisis de Salud Mental

Download Here:

<https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Warning-Signs-of-Crisis-ENG.pdf>

En Español:

<https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Warning-Signs-of-Crisis-ESP.pdf>



## Preparing for Crisis: Creating a Crisis Plan/ Preparación para un caso de Crisis

Download Here:

<https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Preparing-for-Crisis-ENG.pdf>

En Español:

<https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Preparing-for-Crisis-ESP.pdf>



## Warning Signs of Suicide and What to Do/ Signos de Alerta del Suicidio

Download Here:

<https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Warning-Signs-of-Suicide-ENG.pdf>

En Español:

<https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/crisis%20guide/INFO-Warning-Signs-of-Suicide-ESP.pdf>



# Additional Resources

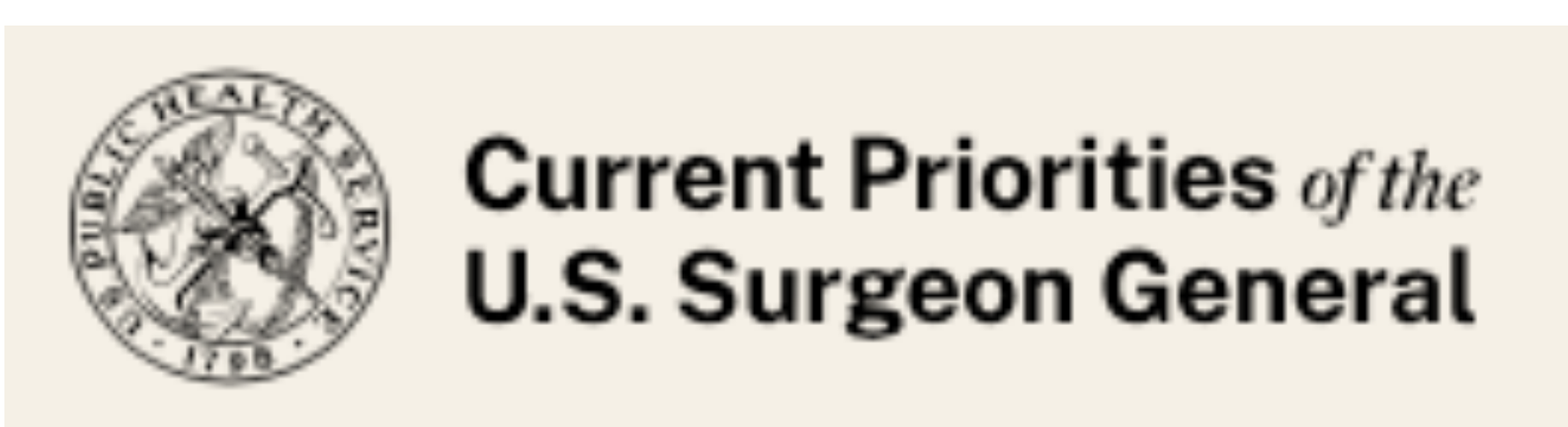


## Find Local Support

Gabriel's Light recommends The Be Strong App which offers local resources and support, interventions, programs and best practices that support you in emotional, behavioral and everyday challenges. Select Local Support and input your zip code for several resources.

Learn more and download the app here:

<https://bestrong.global>



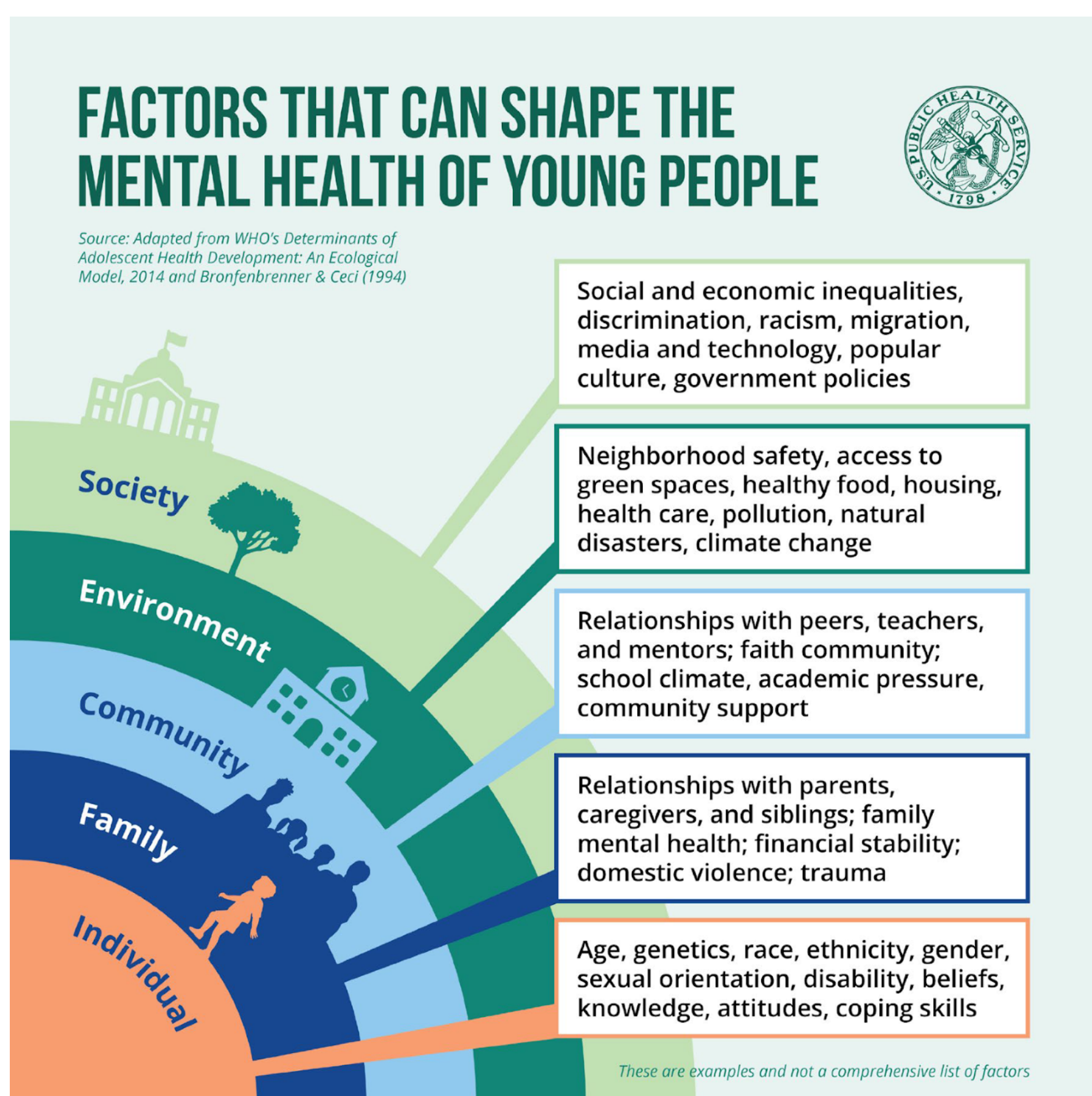
## Protecting Youth Mental Health - The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory

The U.S. Surgeon General offers information and advice about youth mental health. Focusing on youth mental health has been identified as a critical issue in our country.

*\*Mental health is an essential part of overall health, \*COVID-19 added to pre-existing challenges that youth faced, \*mental health is shaped by a combination of factors, \* focusing on youth mental health now is critical.*  
-Dr. Vivek H. Murthy Surgeon General of the United States.

Find information & a guide on protecting youth mental health here:

<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html#action>



**Weekly Check-In for Parents/Caregivers with their child/children!**  
Ask any of the following questions to develop practical strategies with your child on how to best support their mental health.  
*\*\*You can tailor the questions to fit your child's needs.*

What's your favorite way to relax or de-stress?	What has been your favorite part of the week so far?
How are things going with your friends? What is something cool you talked about or did recently to connect with them? What is something fun you have planned soon with your friends?	Do you feel like you have too many responsibilities? Do you think you are managing your time well? What could support you?
What has been taking up most of your mental energy these days?	What new activities, music or hobbies do you want to try?
Do you feel anxious? If so, what leads to that feeling, and what does anxiety feel like to you?	What's something exciting that you're looking forward to? What is something that you are absolutely dreading?
Who or what is inspiring you the most right now?	I love you and care about you. What's the best way to regularly connect about mental health and wellness? What is one thing I can do right now to encourage you?

## Talking To Your Child About Their Mental Health & Weekly Check-ins With Your Child

Tips on how to connect with your children regularly to stay in tune with them and their mental health.

Download here:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Kids/How-to-Talk-to-Your-Child-About-Their-Mental-Health>



# Additional Resources for Coping and Self Care



## Coping & Caregiving Support from NAMI

NAMI offers a range of resources from support groups to tips for self-care. It is important that caregivers keep themselves healthy!

Coping tips and information for family members and caregivers:

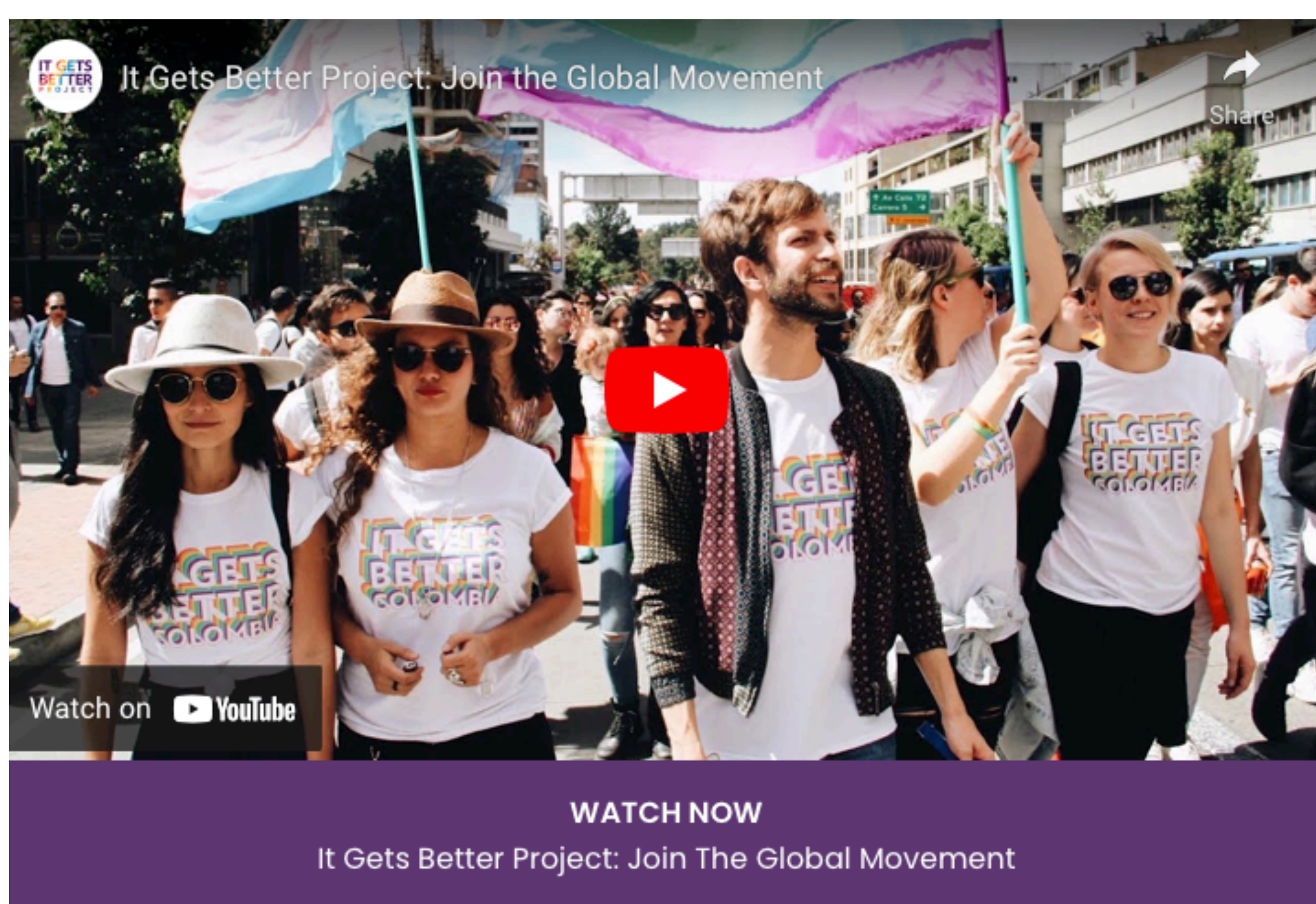
<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Family-Members-and-Caregivers>

NAMI Family-to-Family educational program:

<https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Family-to-Family>

Find local support groups and discussion groups:

<https://www.nami.org/findsupport>



## Support for LGBTQ+

The It Gets Better Project's mission is to uplift, empower and connect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth around the globe.

Learn more and find support:

<https://itgetsbetter.org>



## Videos to Help Kids with Anxiety

Watch videos to transform worry, anger, perfectionism, and negative energy into resilience. Recommended by schools, social workers, parents, and mental health professionals.

Watch here:

<https://gozen.com>



## Science-based Journals for Kids & Parents

Support for raising kind, resilient, confident kids. Recommended by doctors and social workers.

Watch here:

<https://biglifejournal.com>