



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Thriving or Barely Surviving? How to Help Yourself in Crisis

By Heather Ford, MSW, LICSW
Contact at: hford@fchn.com

We're struggling through the second year of COVID-19 and it might be a good time to look in the mirror and ask yourself truthfully, how am I really doing? While some of us think we have adapted to pandemic life, it's helpful to have some guidelines to review that make us self reflect and answer the tough questions.

- Am I sleeping OK?
- Am I feeling overwhelmed and irritated?
- Am I feeling exhausted?
- Am I avoiding co-workers, family and friends?
- Am I drinking too much right now?
- Are things so bad I'm thinking of ending my own life?

The answers may surprise you. Because the truth is, many of us are not thriving. Many of us are barely surviving, struggling, and feeling like we are in total crisis. And once we are in crisis mode, it might not take long to experience suicidal thoughts.

National Suicide Prevention Week is September 9-11. Nearly 48,000 people died by suicide in 2019 and current pandemic suicide data suggests that while the rate has decreased in white populations, it has nearly doubled among the black population. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people under age 34. Do not take thoughts of suicide lightly. Instead, we should check in with ourselves and our loved ones to ask the tough questions, and understand how to handle the answers. Be aware that it's normal for us to minimize our symptoms and hide how we really feel.

The Stress Continuum

The diagram on the following page shows the four stages of the stress continuum. If you (or your loved ones) are in the **Surviving** or **Struggling** zone:

- Start talking to someone about it and get it off your chest - this alone can help so much!
- Remind yourself these feelings are a normal reaction to stress and can be helped.
- Call your EAP to determine next steps and appropriate referrals.
- Consider calling your primary care provider, too.
- Continue to check in with yourself and with others over time, to see if your symptoms are improving, or if you need additional help or support.

If you feel like you're **In Crisis**, ask yourself the following:

- Are things so bad right now that I'm thinking about ending my own life?
- If so, do I feel safe?
- Who do I trust that I can talk to about this?
- If you have guns in the home, is it time to ask someone to hold on to them for a bit until I feel better?

Take the Next Steps

Most people don't want to kill themselves, they just want to feel better. Remind yourself that most people DO get better after reaching out for help. For immediate telephonic support with a counselor, the EAP is available 24/7 at 800-777-4114. We can also help you find a face to face counselor, or make other recommendations as needed. If you don't feel that you can keep yourself safe, it's time to head to the emergency room. Call someone you trust to take you, or call 911 and emergency services will pick you up. The bottom line is that you don't have to go through this alone. Get someone involved and seek the guidance of professionals. You can get through this!



Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V. Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.