



Managing a Psychiatric Emergency with Your Adolescent

Managing psychiatric emergencies in the home can be particularly challenging. Often time we are scared, don't know exactly what to do and can be fearful of doing "the wrong thing." Some things your adolescent may say or do could be a sign that they are in immediate danger include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Talks or "jokes" about death
- Giving away items that they love
- Saying "goodbye" to friends, including on social media
- Talks about hurting themselves or wanting to die
- Says they feel like a burden, and it would be better if they were gone
- Stops wanting to do things they used to enjoy
- Engaging in self-harm behaviors, including substance abuse

If your adolescent is showing any of these signs, ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide. Contrary to popular belief, research shows that asking does not increase the risk of suicide. If your adolescent struggles with suicidal thinking or intent, you can reduce the risk of suicide by removing pills and firearms from your home. If you can't remove them, place them in a safe, lockbox or other secure place.

Helpful Tips if Your Adolescent is Experiencing a Psychiatric Emergency

Step 1: Identify that an emergency is happening

It's hard to know if your child is having a psychiatric emergency but here are a few signs to look out for:

- **Self-harm:** substance abuse, cuts, burns, large sores from scratching, chunks of hair missing, or other self-inflicted wounds
- **Apathy towards living:** hopelessness, feeling like a burden, disinterest in getting out of bed, or making comments like "maybe it would be better if I wasn't around" or "I don't think I can live with the pain"
- **Suicidal behaviors:** collecting pills or sharp objects, leaving goodbye notes or letters, giving away belongings, new risk-seeking behavior, reckless driving, or a newfound secretiveness
- **Imminent risk:** If your child ever expresses that they want to end their life or have a plan to end their life, they are at immediate risk of suicide

Step 2: Take them to the Emergency Department at your local hospital

It's not easy as a caregiver to make this choice, but it is the right one to make. If you cannot safely transport your adolescent to the nearest Emergency Department (ED), please call 911 and tell them you have a mental health emergency and need your adolescent taken to the ED. In addition, but not in place of immediate hospitalization if needed, the National Suicide Hotline at **988** or **1-800-273-8255** for immediate assistance.

Step 3: Create a safety network

After going to the hospital, it's important to address with your child what led them to feeling that ending their life was their only option. Locking away pills and sharp objects in the home will be an important step in ensuring your adolescent's safety. It's also important to have your child continue to engage in supportive

services with a mental health professional. The hospital will likely connect you to a mental health service provider within your insurance.

Please reach out to our Admissions Team 916.623.7215 or <https://lightfully.com/admissions/> to see if Lightfully Behavioral Health may be the right choice for you and your adolescent.