



MENTAL CRISES –
WHAT CAN YOU DO?





**MENTAL CRISES AND
PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
CAN AFFECT ANYBODY.**

Editorial:

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"I FEEL LISTLESS, TIRED AND WASHED OUT. I'VE BEEN LIKE THIS FOR THREE MONTHS."

Phil, 35

"I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT AND HAVE THOUGHTS THAT TERRIFY ME. IN THE MORNING I FEEL EXHAUSTED AND CAN'T GET UP."

Debbie, 28

"I GET PANIC ATTACKS AND I DON'T KNOW WHY."

Margaret, 67

Do these descriptions sound familiar to you? Do you feel overwhelmed and helpless?

We all feel down from time to time. But what happens if our black mood persists? This often indicates that the person is going through a mental or psychological crisis. This can indicate a need for change in a particular aspect of the person's life, but a mental crisis can also develop into a psychiatric disorder.

During the course of a year around a quarter of the Swiss population suffer from a psychiatric disorder that can be diagnosed.

Many people experience a mental crisis or disorder once in their lifetime that they cannot necessarily get over without help.

Some people are able to overcome their crisis by themselves.

But if you find this is too much for you, talk to someone you trust.

Don't ignore the situation, take charge and dare to make a change!

Talk to someone you trust and who will listen to you.

WHAT SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS CAN INDICATE A MENTAL CRISIS?

STRESS
ANXIETY
FEELINGS OF GUILT
FEELING ANXIOUS
BEING SAD
CUTTING YOURSELF OFF
BEING TOUCHY
BURNOUT
PANIC
FEELING LONELY
LOSING INTEREST IN THINGS
HAVING CONFLICTING EMOTIONS
FEELING UNWORTHY
FEELING HELPLESS
PLAY-ACTING
A FEELING OF INNER EMPTINESS
POWERLESSNESS
CRYING
NERVOUSNESS
FEARS
TORMENTING THOUGHTS
PHYSICAL PAIN IN THE HEAD,
STOMACH OR BACK

Mental crises can take different forms, and are experienced and perceived differently by every individual.

A mental crisis is not something you have just imagined, and it is not a mark of personal failure.

Mental crises and psychiatric disorders often have a prior history. Difficult life circumstances, traumatic experiences or extreme, long-lasting stress can lead to mental crises and psychiatric disorders. But a mental crisis can also come on suddenly and unexpectedly.

It is sometimes hard to distinguish a mental crisis from a routine bad mood.

If you are unsure, talk to an expert whom you trust.

WHAT CAN TRIGGER A MENTAL CRISIS?

- Heavy demands at work - pressure to perform, time pressure, significant physical or mental challenges.
- Juggling work, domestic life and children.
- Financial worries: low pay, or fear of losing your job.
- People are more vulnerable to mental crises or developing a psychiatric disorder at certain times of their lives, such as childhood, adolescence, just after retirement or when very old.
- For women, pregnancy and childbirth are very emotional times, and also impose major physical challenges.
- Teenagers face many problems, such as the pressure to do well at school, lack of respect from workmates and even bullying.
- Persistent conflicts with partners, spouses or relatives.
- Bereavement is a major blow in life.
- Migrants can feel under constant strain, especially when having to deal with particular issues such as:
 - Separation from the person's own family and close friends
 - Precarious residency status and the associated worries about the future
 - Lack of respect by society as a whole, the experience of racism and discrimination
 - Lack of opportunities to integrate into society and find work
 - Concern about the integration of children
 - Worries about relatives in the country of origin
 - Insufficient language skills
- Traumatic experiences and major mental strain, even if the events are long in the past, can trigger a mental crisis. The situation which migrants experienced in their country of origin before migrating (war, violence, destruction, torture, escape) can be highly traumatic.

As with any disease there are factors and triggers that increase the risk of suffering a mental crisis.

I NEED HELP!

"I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, BUT I JUST DON'T GET BETTER."

Joan, 57

"I FEEL TRAPPED, HELPLESS, AND DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO."

Maximilian, 43

"MY PARTNER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND MY PROBLEM. I HAVEN'T GOT ANYBODY ELSE EITHER WHO UNDERSTANDS ME, SUPPORTS ME AND WILL LISTEN TO ME."

Jessica, 31

If thoughts like these are getting the upper hand, it's time to accept help.

Sometimes it is hard to admit to yourself that you need help.

Mental crises and psychiatric disorders are still seen as stigmatising, and misconceptions are widespread. This is why many people are afraid to be labelled as a 'problem case', or feel a failure because they can't cope on their own.

There's no shame in asking for help. It is a brave decision.

We all know that there are limits on how far we can deal with difficult situations.

Everybody's limits are different. Where I come up against my limit, perhaps someone else can help me find a way out.

The first step in overcoming your crisis is to talk to an expert.

- You could talk about your problem over the phone with an expert. You don't have to give your name, and the matter is dealt with confidentially.
- Or you could see your GP or another expert whom you trust.



"I'VE BEEN IN MENTAL TORMENT
FOR WEEKS. I AM DISTRESSED AND MY
WHOLE BODY IS IN PAIN."

John, 58

WHERE CAN I TURN?

All experts are bound by confidentiality rules.

- **A doctor you trust**

This could be your GP or a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy.

- **PRO MENTE SANA**

Helpline - confidential help over the phone

A confidential telephone helpline is the first step to professional help.

Psychologists and lawyers at Pro Mente Sana can give you advice over the phone.

In German:

9 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays,
2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursdays. No e-mail advice service

Call 0848 800 858 (standard rate)

In French:

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.
No e-mail advice service

Legal advice: 0840 0000 61

Psychosocial advice: 0840 0000 62 (local rate)

Internet

You will find links to various advice centres on our home page.

www.promentesana.ch

- **Die Dargebotene Hand (Helping Hand)** - confidential advice over the phone when you have a problem (German, French, Italian)

The Dargebotene Hand is an association offering anonymous contacts for people who need urgent help. You can call them to get your problems off your chest. It is open around the clock as a first port of call for anyone irrespective of cultural background or religion.

It also offers help by e-mail

(you will receive a reply within 48 hours) and one-to-one chatrooms.

Call 143, www.143.ch

- **Help for children and adolescents (German, French, Italian)**
 - confidential help when you have a problem
 Free advice by telephone and in chatrooms for children and adolescents facing problems or who are living in difficult circumstances. Available around the clock, every day of the year, and you can remain anonymous if you wish.
 The Internet is a valuable source of answers, information and tips on topics of interest to children and adolescents.
[Call 147, www.147.ch](http://www.147.ch)

- **Social services**
 Social workers employed by your local council can be very helpful in getting you on the road to dealing with various problems.

- **Spiritual help from religious communities**
 A spiritual advisor for your particular religion can be a good starting point and advise you on problems you are facing in your life.

SERVICES AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT MIGRANTS

- **Clinics for migrants**
 The psychiatric hospitals and other institutions in larger cities such as Basel, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, Winterthur and Zurich offer psychiatric or psychological clinics for migrants, with interpreter assistance where necessary. The interpreters are bound by confidentiality undertakings.

- **Ambulatorium für Folter- und Kriegsopfer afk**
 (walk-in clinic for victims of war and torture), Swiss Red Cross
 Werkstrasse 16, 3084 Wabern
[Call 031 960 77 77, gi-ambulatorium@redcross.ch](mailto:gi-ambulatorium@redcross.ch)
www.redcross.ch

- **Ambulatorium für Folter- und Kriegsopfer** (walk-in clinic for victims of war and torture), psychiatric out-patient department
 Universitätsspital Zürich, Culmannstrasse 8, 8091 Zürich,
[Call 044 255 52 80, www.psychiatrie.usz.ch](http://www.psychiatrie.usz.ch)

- **Geneva walk-in clinic for victims of war and torture (ctg Genève)**
 Département de médecine communautaire,
 rue Micheli-du-Crest 24, 1211 Genève 14,
[Call 022 372 53 28, www.hcuge.ch](http://www.hcuge.ch)

■ **Appartenances Genève**

bd St-Georges 72, 1205 Genève,

Call 022 781 02 05

appartenances@appartenances-ge.ch, www.appartenances-ge.ch

■ **Appartenances Vaud**

Consultations psychothérapeutiques pour migrants (CPM)

www.appartenances.ch

■ **CPM-Lausanne**, rue des Terreaux 10, 1003 Lausanne,
Call 021 341 12 50, cpm-lausanne@appartenances.ch

■ **CPM-Vevey**, rue des Communaux 2A, 1800 Vevey,
Call 021 922 45 22, cpm-vevey@appartenances.ch

■ **CPM-Yverdon**, rue de l'Ancienne-Poste 2, 1400 Yverdon-les-Bains,
Call 024 425 06 65, cpm-yverdon@appartenances.ch

■ **Register of multilingual psychotherapists**

Publisher: Schweizer Psychotherapeutinnen und Psychotherapeuten
Verband (Swiss Psychotherapist's Association),

Call 043 268 93 00, www.psychotherapie.ch

EMERGENCY HELP WHEN YOU NEED ADVICE RIGHT NOW

■ **Emergency telephone number**

Call the emergency number **(144)** in any life-threatening situation,
whether caused by accident or illness.

■ **Emergency doctor service**

Contact the emergency doctor service if you cannot get in touch with your
GP. Call the information line **(1811)** to get the number for your location.

■ **Casualty department**

The casualty department of your nearest hospital. Every casualty depart-
ment will see people suffering a mental crisis.

■ **Outpatient psychiatric departments,**

E.g. external psychiatric service, crisis centre, psychiatric walk-in clinic:
these are medical facilities run by doctors. Most cantons have centres
of this type. There are facilities for children and adolescents as well as
centres for adults.



WHAT SUPPORT AND TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE?

Various forms of support and treatment are available.

They include medication, psychotherapy and social support.

How can drug treatment help me?

Medication is not always necessary. But people who suffer from chronic insomnia or anxiety will be grateful for sleeping pills or tranquillizers prescribed by a doctor. Medical professionals use specific drugs, called psychoactive drugs, to treat patients suffering from depression or anxiety. They will not cure you on their own, but can suppress distressing symptoms and help you regain your health (recover). It is important that you take any psychoactive drugs regularly at the prescribed dose, and that you discuss their effects with your doctor.

What is psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy is therapy for the mind. As with any other form of treatment there are various methods, including for instance talking therapies and physical therapies. Psychotherapy is carried out by a psychiatrist or a psychologist.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy offers you a safe space in which to talk about difficult circumstances in your life, pressure, emotions and thoughts. You can undergo new experiences and gain insights which will bring about lasting changes in your life. Psychotherapy will help relieve your anxiety, improve your sleep, help you mix with other people with confidence and cope better with situations and challenges.

Physical therapy

It does the soul good to be physically active and breathe deeply. Tension and physical pain can also be the expression of mental anguish. Physical therapy teaches you to relax your body and improve your breathing. In this way it has a positive impact on your mental well-being.

Social and financial support

You can if you wish also obtain practical support to help you deal with difficult situations and conflicts that you are experiencing. This can include medical discussions with relatives, your employer or the authorities. Specialists (doctors, psychologists and social workers) will work with you to find solutions for various problems that arise in everyday life.

IS THERE ANY OTHER HELP?

Complementary medicine

Along with conventional medicine, other forms of treatment such as homeopathy and Chinese medicine are available.

Self-help groups

People with similar problems join together to form groups.

They meet regularly, exchange experiences and give one another advice.

Spiritual support

Someone who shares your faith and is responsible for spiritual welfare can help and support you.

CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS GET HELP TOO?

The relatives, partners and friends of people suffering from a mental crisis can also feel overwhelmed and unable to do anything.

They sometimes have difficulty in understanding and accepting a mental crisis or psychiatric disorder. This can lead to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, but can also make them blame the sufferer, saying things like: "You're lazy", "You don't want to work", "You've got a weak character".

But relatives can also get professional help too. Call the hotline, or contact your GP. Experts can help you.

WHO CARRIES OUT SPECIALIST TREATMENTS?

Psychiatrists

are medically trained. They are responsible for administering psychotherapy and psychoactive drugs as medical treatment for mental problems.

Psychotherapists

are experts who have had special training in psychotherapy. They support and treat people undergoing a mental crisis or suffering from mental problems.

Trust is the key

It is important that you can trust the person treating you. It is sometimes easier for patients to have someone of the same sex treating them.

Being able to speak your own language while having treatment can also be important.

Don't hesitate to say what you want and need.

Overview of medical and therapeutic treatment



WHO PAYS?

As a general rule, all people living in Switzerland who have statutory health insurance have the same entitlement to services paid for by the basic level of statutory health insurance.

WHAT WILL MY STATUTORY HEALTH INSURANCE PAY FOR?

Medical and psychiatric treatment

Your statutory health insurance will pay for services listed in the basic plan. Particular provisions apply to psychotherapy.

Treatment by psychotherapists who are not medically qualified

The services provided by psychotherapists who are employed by a doctor are paid for by basic statutory health insurance plans (delegated psychotherapy). But health insurance funds are not obliged to pay for psychotherapy carried out by self-employed psychotherapists who have not studied medicine. However, many health insurance funds offer supplementary insurance plans that cover part of the costs of treatment by qualified psychotherapists. When you see the therapist for the first time, ask him or her how much of the costs of treatment are covered by statutory health insurance.

Complementary medicine

The costs of these treatments are not covered by basic insurance plans, except for acupuncture administered by specially trained doctors. Many health insurance funds offer supplementary insurance plans that cover part of the costs of complementary practices.

Who pays for the advice and support I receive?

If you do not know exactly who will pay for the help you want to receive, contact the relevant body (e.g. social services department, home care provider).

EVERYONE'S PATH TO HEALTH IS DIFFERENT

There are just as many ways of becoming healthy as there are people. What works for one person won't necessarily work for everyone else. The important thing is for every individual to find out what he or she needs to regain health and well-being. Some people will find psychoactive drugs a great help in warding off further crises, but others set great store by coping without the help of medication. They look for other strategies to prevent crises, overcome fears, alleviate mood swings and deal with voices that torment them.

The healing process is not a perfectly straight line.

The paths back to health are not straight. You may experience crises from time to time as you recover. Individual symptoms might recur, and you might even need to go to hospital. Don't let this discourage you. Science confirms that crises become rarer and shorter as an individual recovers.

Taking action, seeking help and starting down the path that is right for you is both an opportunity and a challenge.

"NOW I'M GLAD THAT I WENT TO SEE A PSYCHIATRIST. IT WAS A BIG STEP FOR ME. I DIDN'T TELL ANYBODY ABOUT IT TO START WITH. THE PSYCHIATRIST DISCUSSED POSSIBLE TREATMENTS WITH ME. I DECIDED ON MEDICATION AND PSYCHOTHERAPY. LATER ON I ALSO GOT IN TOUCH WITH A SELF-HELP GROUP. TALKING THINGS THROUGH WITH OTHER PEOPLE IN THE SAME POSITION HELPED ME FEEL THAT I WAS UNDERSTOOD. I'VE LEARNED THAT THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS. NOW I FEEL FINE AGAIN AND ABLE TO LAUGH."

Bob, 46

LEGAL ADVICE FOR PEOPLE IN EMPLOYMENT

Do I have to tell my employer that I am experiencing a crisis and so cannot work, or will have to cut my hours?

You are only required to tell your employer that you cannot work on health grounds. You do not have to specify what kind of health problem you have. A medical certificate does not have to specify the reason you are unable to work either.

Am I entitled to any benefit because I am unable to work?

If you are employed, you will receive wages or sickness benefit for a certain period. You should also check your insurance policies (statutory health insurance and private policies) to see whether you are entitled to sickness benefit if you cannot work.

Can my employer dismiss me because of my mental problems?

In principle an employer can dismiss an employee for any reason. But there are time limits within which an employer cannot dismiss someone who is unable to work, and this also applies to inability to work for mental reasons. You can contact a legal advice service, such as that offered by Pro Mente Sana, to find out what protection you have.

My employer has suggested that I resign. Should I?

If you resign, or agree to dissolution of your employment relationship by mutual consent, you may lose entitlement to wages or insurance benefits. Contact a legal advice service before taking such action.

You can change a lot with help! Don't be discouraged!

It can sometimes take quite a lot of effort to find the right specialist. The following organizations can give you addresses near your home. This information is free.

PSYCHIATRIC AND PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC HELP

- **Ask your GP.**
- **SGPP:** Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie (Swiss Society for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy)
Call 031 313 88 33, www.psychiatrie.ch

PSYCHOTHERAPY: ARRANGING THERAPY SESSIONS

- **FSP:** Föderation der Schweizer Psychologinnen und Psychologen (Federation of Swiss Psychologists)
Call 031 388 88 00, www.psychologie.ch
- **SPV:** Schweizerischer Psychotherapeuten Verband (Swiss Psychotherapists' Association)
Call 043 268 93 75, www.psychotherapie.ch
Register of multilingual psychotherapists
- **Society of psychotherapists working in the delegated therapy sector**
Call 043 497 95 65 (Stefan Dietrich), www.gedap.ch

SELF-HELP GROUPS

- **KOSCH:** Koordination und Förderung der Selbsthilfegruppen in der Schweiz (Coordination and support for self-help groups in Switzerland) Information about self-help groups
Call 0848 810 814, www.kosch.ch
- **VASK:** Vereinigung der Angehörigen von Schizophrenie- und Psychisch Kranken (Association of relatives of people suffering from schizophrenia and other mental illnesses)
Call 061 271 16 40, www.vask.ch

SUICIDE PREVENTION

- **IPSILON:** Initiative zur Prävention von Suizid in der Schweiz (Swiss suicide prevention initiative) This organization can provide information about national and local contact points.
www.ipsilon.ch

LEGAL ADVICE SERVICES

Sorting out legal issues when you are experiencing a mental crisis (most of these are free)

- **PRO MENTE SANA**

In German:

9 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays

2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursdays

[Advice line 0848 800 858 \(standard rate\)](tel:0848800858), [no e-mail advice service](#)

In French:

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

[Legal advice helpline: 0840 0000 61](tel:0840000061)

[Psychosocial advice: 0840 0000 62 \(local rate\)](tel:0840000062)

Internet

You will find links to various advice centres on our home page

www.promentesana.ch

- **If you want to find a legal advice centre near you, look up the following terms on the Internet or in a telephone directory:** Rechtsberatung, Beratungsstellen, Sozialdienst, Frauenzentrale, Gewerkschaften, Kaufmännischer Verein (legal advice, advice centres, social services, women's aid centre, trade unions, sectoral organization) etc., plus Migrantin, Migrant, Migration (migrant or migration) and the name of your nearest town.
[For example: "Rechtsberatung, St. Gallen, Migration"](#)

PRO MENTE SANA

Pro Mente Sana is a Swiss foundation providing information and advice on mental illness and mental health. It acts to defend the rights and interests of sufferers.

Pro Mente Sana offers a range of publications containing advice on various topics. Please consult the publications list on our website.

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