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Lifeline Crisis Chat and Text

Emotional Support for Chat and Text Crisis Counselors

Crisis intervention is, across the board, challenging work. Conversations, stories, and unknown resolutions can stick with a crisis counselor long after they've left for the day. This is even more common when the person in crisis was potentially high or imminent risk for suicide. It's important for crisis counselors to have support before, during, and after these interactions to ensure their own wellbeing.

Before a shift

- **Be welcoming.** It's important for crisis counselors to feel valued and seen. They do hard work and it's not always easy to feel ready for a shift.
- **Be social.** Building a trusting team and environment means talking about more than challenging interactions. It means getting to know each other as humans.
- **Be proactive.** Always remind them that you're available to talk. Sometimes a crisis counselor needs to hear that multiple times to know it's genuine.

During a shift

- **Be available.** Every set-up is different, but crisis counselors should know the various ways they can ask you – and their colleagues – for support during an interaction.
- **Be gentle.** If a crisis counselor is struggling in the moment, it's critical that the support they get is positive. Any constructive feedback should wait until the interaction is complete.
- **Be curious.** It's normal for some new crisis counselors to feel anxious about asking for help. Checking in during their shift can encourage questions.

After a shift

- **Be specific.** When debriefing, specific, open-ended questions will encourage more sharing and honesty than broad, closed-ended questions.
- **Be grounded.** Too much positivity can be detrimental. It's important to validate and acknowledge how difficult an interaction was or how hard the work is generally.
- **Be grateful.** Crisis counselors should feel valued throughout their time on the team – not just when they're new or after a tough shift.

Ongoing Support

- **Be transparent.** We should never put rose-colored glasses over the difficult work or the toll it can take. It can lead to crisis counselors becoming closed off.
- **Be evaluating.** Every crisis counselor is different and needs different methods of support. Getting to know them and paying attention to how they receive support can help you tailor your approach and reduce their stress and uncertainty. The goal of evaluation is to help a crisis counselor to learn and to improve their skills, not to disparage or criticize them and their work.
- **Be encouraging.** Crisis counselors tend to be tough on themselves. Crisis counselors who are struggling may not be self-encouraging and it's important we step in to fill that vital role. Validation for their victories, big or small, can go a long way in building their confidence.