

Some Tips to Manage Crisis Telephone & Virtual Helplines

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1. First, consider carefully your regular work and personal commitments, as well as your own personal current circumstances
2. Ensure you are not at risk of being overwhelmed by the crisis you are helping with as it may affect you too
3. Consider your level of training & experience and your ability to adapt to working in Brief Interventions, especially if you are not accustomed to this way of working
4. Remember that people in crisis need to be heard, listened to, even being able to repeat what they have been, or are, going through many times –being by their side listening can be the best help and support at this stage from our profession
5. Ensure you have access and time for supervision of this extra voluntary work
6. Be realistic about how many hours in one week you can offer and avoid over-committing yourself no matter how keen you are to devote time to the crisis.
7. Up to three consultations ‘listening’ can be just good enough
8. Ensure that you take regular breaks between crisis helpline calls as their stressful impact on volunteers can suddenly emerge, particularly in relation to helplines regarding mental health issues
9. You may need to take time out from volunteering in order not to burn out yourself, and be available to return to help eventually
10. Consider forming a peer group with other helpline volunteers for supporting each other and reducing any risk of acting out on rescue fantasies, which we can all be prone to.

Relevant Reference

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.699116>