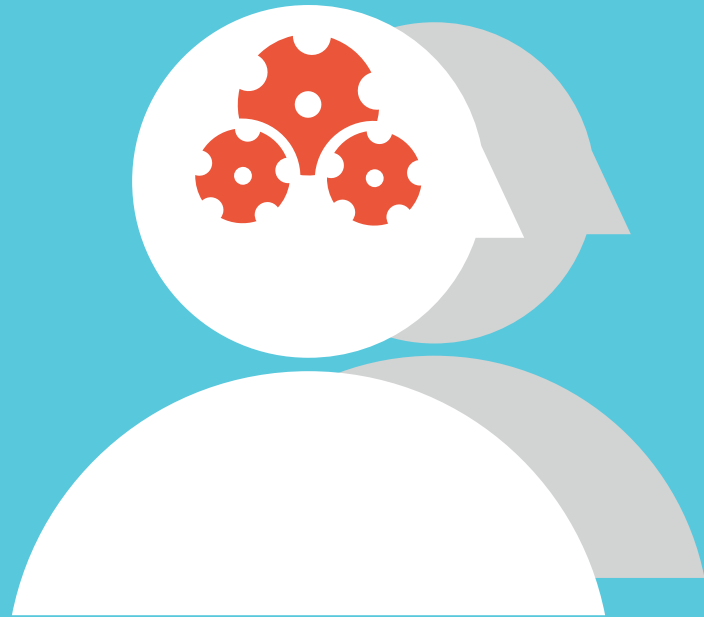




Ollscoil Chathair
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Dublin City University

Crisis Management

Mental Health



†SEIRBHÍS TACAÍOCHTA AGUS FORBARTHA
STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Crisis Management

Crisis? What Crisis?


Crises are normal human reactions to emotionally dangerous situations. If the crisis is caused by a disaster, such as a flood or an earthquake, no one is surprised to see families with extreme emotional disturbance. Yet, when the crisis is not physical but is emotional or relational, such as a result of a death, exam failure, unplanned pregnancy or parental separation, the resulting behaviours and emotional responses are often not granted the same understanding. Regardless of the type of crisis involved, similar patterns of behavior are often exhibited. These include tiredness or exhaustion, helplessness, immobilisation, confusion, physical symptoms and anxiety.



What is a Crisis?

A crisis is what occurs within a person. It is what takes place in response to that event. A crisis, therefore, can be described as an internal human response to an external happening. A crisis occurs in four stages:

- The stimulus or the precipitating event to a crisis occurs. This is usually a catastrophic event, such as the death of a partner, but it may also be the accumulation of a series of events. People who have apparently coped well with a series of difficult occurrences suddenly find themselves so exhausted that they feel they cannot deal with one more problem, even if it seems that this is not a difficult issue to cope with. All their coping strategies are spent and they are thrown into crisis. Occasionally, the precipitator is not readily recognisable to the person in distress. For instance, distress can sometimes present in a physical manner, for example headaches resulting from anxiety before exams. Once the stimulus is uncovered the physical symptoms are reduced. Some precipitators have an



almost automatic crisis response inbuilt, for example a heart attack leading to a fear of death.

- The situation is appraised by a person experiencing it; this creates the perception of the crisis being a hazard or a threat. For a crisis to occur, the stimulus must be seen as a profound threat to the person's well-being, or that of their family. It is viewed as an extremely dangerous situation, one likely to affect life very badly.
- The third factor in the development of a crisis is the coping methods adopted by, and personal resources available to, the person experiencing it. Coping methods are the manner in which people respond to problems. They are the steps taken to resolve difficulties. Each person can access external resources (from family and friends) and internal resources (such as his or her own problem-solving techniques, communication skills) to meet and deal with perceived threat. The effectiveness and adequacy of such resources and coping methods affects the extent to which an individual will experience the threat as a crisis.
- If a person's coping mechanisms do not diminish the threat, a crisis will almost certainly occur. The primary issue in the development of a crisis is the person's perception of the events in question as a serious threat, where his or her coping process does not readily diminish the threatening situation. The resulting crisis usually lasts a maximum of six weeks, although the after effects of any crisis may continue for years, for example after bereavement.

When a person's usual coping methods fail, the disruption causing the threat will increase. People become immobilised or frantically continue trying those methods that have already proved inadequate. Common responses used by people in crisis are "I don't know what to do", "I can't cope" or "I feel so helpless". The more seriously threatening the person's appraisal of the threatening event is, the more regressive his or her coping skills are likely to be. The greater the number and diversity of coping methods available to him or her, the more likely the individual will be able to prevent periods of crisis or at least experience a milder crisis than those with a poorer coping skills.



People in crisis often tend to pull away from the very interpersonal relationships that they need most of that time. It is important to beware that positive interpersonal relationships foster adaptive crisis resolution. A significant factor in the resolution of crises is the willingness to seek help from others. People experiencing crisis, therefore, need other caring people around them.

Intervening in a crisis

The goal in intervening in a crisis is to help the person(s) involved to regain their pre-crisis level of functioning, at least, and to help them learn new, more effective ways of dealing with difficult situations or events. The following may be helpful in achieving these:


Step 1 The first step in crisis management is to determine if a crisis indeed exists. Asking three questions can help in this:

- Has there been a recent onset of troublesome feelings and/or behaviour?

- Have they tended to grow progressively worse?

- Can the time of the onset be linked with some external event, or some change in life situation?

- If the answer to these questions is yes, then it is likely a crisis exists.



Step 2 The next step is to define and understand what has happened in your own mind. Try to identify the one area that precipitated the crisis and focus on that. Start with that one event or stressor.

Step 3 Minimise the physical and psychological danger to yourself, or the other person affected.

Step 4 Take or provide emotional support for yourself or the person affected by the crisis - for example, contact your family, friends, tutor, chaplain or student counsellor.

Step 5 Examine alternatives. A wide variety of appropriate choices may be available as a course of action. The alternatives may refer to:

- Situational supports, i.e. people you know and who care about what happens to you,

- Coping mechanisms, i.e. the actions, behaviours or environmental resources you might use to help to get through the crisis. Steps such as making a decision, accepting a loss that cannot be changed and learning a new skill can all help with coping with a crisis,

- Positive and constructive thinking patterns, for example changing the overall view of the situation from a negative one (problems) to a positive one (goals) can be a very first step. Positive self-talk can be very helpful.

- **Step 6** Make plans. Plan action steps that have a good chance of restoring your emotional balance, or that of the person experiencing the crises. A plan should:

- Identify additional persons, groups and other resources that can be contacted for immediate support,

- Include concrete and positive actions or a variety of constructive activities (such as relaxation, running, reading) which should be both realistic and focused on problem solving.

Step 7 Commit yourself or help the other person commit to the plan. Most of these useful goals in crisis management may be attainable in a matter of weeks. After the crisis has passed, it is important to review what has been learnt, what new strengths and coping skills have been acquired for the resolution of future problems and crises.




After Hours Support

DCU Security

For Emergency/Campus Security 24/7 for all campuses please phone 01 - 7005999

When you dial this number you will be given the following message with four options:

- Dial 1 **FOR EMERGENCIES**. Please note this option will connect you to the main Security Control Room, located on the Glasnevin campus and is to be used for genuine emergencies only where there is a threat to the safety/well-being of an individual or facilities/property.
- Non-emergency calls will not be accepted on this line.



For non-emergencies/routine security assistance requests:

- Dial 2 for Security on Glasnevin campus
- Dial 3 for Security on St. Patrick's campus
- Dial 4 for Security on All Hallows campus

Emergency Services

Fire Brigade, Gardai and Ambulance

Telephone: 999 or 112

Local Hospitals

Mater Hospital

Telephone: 01 803 2000

Beaumont Hospital

Telephone: 01 809 3000

St. Vincent's Hospital, Fairview

Telephone: 01 884 2400

Health Service DCU

Tel: 01-7005143

Email: healthservices@dcu.ie

Interfaith Centre DCU

Tel: 01-7005491

Email: interfaithcentre@dcu.ie

Student Advisory Service DCU

Tel: 01-7007165

Email: student.support@dcu.ie

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-dublin-branch

Telephone: 116 123 (A national 24/7 hour helpline)

Drop in centre at: 112 Marlboro Street, Dublin 1. Open from 10am to 10pm

For 24 hour confidential email Listening Support e-mail: jo@samaritans.org

Aware

<http://www.aware.ie/>

A national support helpline for issues relating to depression and anxiety.

Telephone: 1890 303 302

This helpline is open seven days a week from 10am to 10pm.

Pieta House

Preventing suicide and self-harm www.pieta.ie/contact-us

Telephone: **01 8831000 - Dublin North**

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

This helpline is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Telephone: 1800 77 88 88

Your Mental Health

A national HSE 24/7 mental health information and support services information helpline

Telephone: 1800 742 444

Out of Hours GP Service

www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/3/OutofHours/GPOOH.html

D Doc Local 1850 224477 Out of hours GP

National Text Service Number

50808: a free 24/7 national text service. [Click here](#) for further information

External Support Links

For a full list of external supports [click here](#)



Please remember, The DCU Counselling and Personal Development Service is here to help. Should any questions arise from the above topic or if you would like more information, please feel free to contact us.

Also, if you wish to inquire about making an appointment with the DCU Counselling and Personal Development Service, please do not hesitate to connect with us, we would be more than happy to be of further support to you.



The DCU Counselling and Personal Development Service,

For the Glasnevin Campus

Email: counselling@dcu.ie

Telephone: 01 700 5165

For the St Patrick's Campus

Email: spd.counselling@dcu.ie

Telephone: 01 700 9215

Click [here](#) for our service website which will provide you with further information:



tSeirbhís Tacaíochta agus Forbartha
Student Support and Development

[dcu.ie/students](https://www.dcu.ie/students)