CRISIS INTERVENTION

Third Edition

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Contemporary Issues for On-Site Interveners

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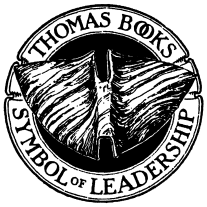

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To those who lost their lives in the line of duty,
September 11, 2001

J.E.H., C.G.H., J.B.M.

To Kacey, Ralph and Elizabeth

J.E.H. and C.G.H.

To Linda, Michael, and Mary Grace

J.B.M.

INSTRUCTOR'S PREFACE

The purpose of this preface is to provide criminal justice educators and other professionals with a strategy for teaching crisis intervention in the criminal justice curriculum. The purpose of such a course is to increase one's understanding of the nature and causes of crises, misconceptions, legal dimensions, criminal justice aspects, and the intervention procedures for the types of crises experienced by those who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The course focuses on the analysis of crises and the interactional skills necessary for effective intervention. This component of the criminal justice curriculum will assist both in-service and preservice students to meet their common goals of protecting society and facilitating the delivery of services to victims.

The Rationale for a Crisis Intervention Course

In an era when crime ranks in the forefront of domestic social issues and the administration of criminal justice is a major concern of public officials and the public, every American is, in a sense, a victim of crime. The national trauma experienced as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, has vividly demonstrated the truth of this statement. As described in Chapter Five, the direct victims of crimes experience a great deal of stress which can lead to a crisis. This crisis in an individual's life involves a turning point including both danger and opportunity. During the disorganization precipitated by a crisis event, the basis for either positive or negative change emerges. If interveners know and demonstrate appropriate and timely intervention skills, they will help achieve a positive outcome for the victim.

Criminal justice professionals are confronted with crisis situations on a daily basis. They are on the scene handling the vast majority of

emotional disturbances because of their immediate availability and authority. Further, criminal justice agents find themselves involved with people in trouble: those in trouble with the law, those who are victims of crime, and those who are involved in noncriminal conflicts and disturbances.

The criminal justice professional must have the necessary theoretical foundation and applied knowledge in order to assess crisis situations and to intervene properly in a crisis. Unfortunately, a review of college and university criminal justice programs indicates that adequate course work is not being provided (Nemeth, 1991). As a result, criminal justice students are inadequately prepared for their community service role.

Correctional and law enforcement training programs tend to be inadequate. They are too technically oriented with minimal time spent on crisis theory. Inadequate training in crisis intervention is a disservice to society and to the criminal justice agent.

Objections

Objections to crisis intervention in the criminal justice curriculum include

1. Crisis intervention should be taught in the correctional and law enforcement academies,
2. It is merely training and, as such, not an academic subject.

A response to these two objections is in order.

A review of academy training programs reveals that they spend very little time on human relations and crisis intervention training (Hendricks, 1982). The overwhelming majority of training received by new officers is directed at enforcement and custodial activities, yet only 10 to 15 percent of an officer's duty time will be directed at these activities. Since at least one-half of an officer's time is devoted to interpersonal problems/crisis situations, at least one-half of the training should be devoted to those topics. Further, most criminal justice agencies do not require a new employee to attend the academy immediately, but rather require attendance within the first year of employment. The new, untrained officer is expected to deal with crises utilizing common sense and instinct. Although these qualities are important, much more is necessary. The newly admitted professional must

have a good understanding of crisis theory, intervention procedures, and the legal dimensions of intervention. This instruction can only benefit the newly admitted professional.

Crisis intervention education provides for a workable combination of both theory and practice. The purpose of this education is to translate the ideal into practice. Most academic criminal justice departments state that their goal is to provide such a workable combination and to prepare students for translating theory into practice. Students obtaining entry level positions in criminal justice should be able to demonstrate these intervention skills because of their course work. In addition, students should be demonstrating their skills during their daily activities. Increased communication skills, improved interpersonal relations, and knowledge of the various facets of crisis intervention will assist students in their personal relationships, in the workplace, as well as in other college courses.

Uniqueness of Course

This course is designed for criminal justice professionals. The course focuses on on-site intervention as opposed to walk-in or telephone crisis intervention. Criminal justice aspects of crisis intervention are an important element of the course. These aspects include the legal rights and liabilities of the victim, the offender, and the criminal justice professional/intervener.

To improve the capability and responsiveness of the criminal justice agent in crisis situations, the agent must become knowledgeable about all aspects of a crisis: the nature of specific types of crises; the prevalence of specific types of crises on a national and local level; misconceptions and myths; characteristics of offenders and victims; social-psychological aspects of crises and each specific type of crisis; assessment; mediation; methods of defusing and crisis resolution; and sources and methods of referral. In essence, the student as intervener needs to obtain what Morrice (1976) terms *psychodynamic awareness*, i.e., the ability to recognize, understand, and make appropriate responses to emotional distress.

Resources for Instructors and Students

This book includes a number of resources that both students and instructors may use to facilitate learning. Each chapter begins with a

statement of the learning objectives for the chapters. Within the chapter, key concepts are highlighted in the headings for each section and *italicized* within the text. At the end of each chapter there are several activities that will allow the student to practice the skills described in the chapter.

The Appendices to the book also provide some assistance in learning. Appendix One lists several useful Internet sites. The instructor and students may use these sites to discover additional resources for the intervener and to maintain up-to-date information.

Appendix Two is a detailed syllabus for a course in crisis intervention. The instructor may use it as the basis for his or her own syllabus.

Appendix Three provides guidelines for role plays in crisis intervention, as well as several role-play scenarios. Along with the chapter activities, role playing provides an invaluable method of practicing crisis intervention skills in a controlled environment.

Another important learning resource is the reference list. As students and instructors conduct research to learn more about specific areas of crisis intervention practice, the references herein provide a starting point for research.

J.E.H.
J.M.
C.G.H.

INTRODUCTION

We have written this book for preservice and in-service crisis interveners. The term, crisis intervener, includes all front-line workers in criminal justice, public safety, and social services who come into contact with persons in crisis. The list includes firefighters, police officers, community service officers, correctional workers, emergency medical workers, ministers, probation and parole officers, protective service workers, social workers, victim assistance workers, and others.

The purpose of this book is to assist interveners when they provide needed control and direction to people who feel that their world is falling apart. Although the book focuses on criminal justice practitioners, the principles and guidelines can be applied in most settings.

Although there is a great deal of information available on crisis counseling in a controlled environment, there is a dearth of information on emergency, on-site, face-to-face intervention. This book is designed to fill that void in the literature. The authors hope that training academies, educational institutions, and crisis intervention agencies will apply the contents of this book to their specific crisis intervention needs.

In this book, we address both theory and practice. Theory must not be seen as irrelevant, since all practice has a theoretical basis. Without an understanding of theory, practitioners may become technical experts, yet lack the flexibility to cope with new situations.

Without information on practical crisis information, some readers may not be able to readily incorporate the knowledge into their practice. Step-by-step procedures, examples, and role plays are presented to meet this need. In this manner, the reader may learn directly and systematically the principles of crisis intervention.

A crisis intervener must possess skill in communication, conflict resolution, cultural competence, and assessment. The intervener must

understand specific types of crises, how people react to them, and how the nature of a crisis may affect one's crisis intervention efforts. Each chapter deals with a specific topic that will help the reader gain needed knowledge and skills. All the authors have training and field experience in crisis intervention and have experienced the satisfaction of successful interventions and the frustrations accompanying failure.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS

Chapter One introduces the history of crisis intervention and crisis intervention programs. The role of crisis intervention in criminal justice practice is described. It also explains the basic concepts underlying crisis intervention.

Chapter Two provides information on the skills needed to be an effective crisis intervener. The chapter discusses communication, cultural competency, and conflict management.

Chapter Three explains assessment in a field setting. The chapter details procedures for assuring one's safety in an on-site intervention as well as describing the assessment of lethality and psychological functioning.

In Chapter Four, the crisis intervention process is described in detail. In this chapter, interveners learn how to provide support, direction, and control to persons in crisis as they attempt to lay the foundation for the best possible resolution of the crisis.

Victims of crime are often in need of intervention services. In Chapter Five, the nature and extent of criminal victimization are described. The chapter also examines the psychological impact of victimization and describes some of the community resources available to crime victims.

Crises often erupt due to various forms of intimate violence. Chapter Six provides an overview of intimate violence and discusses the role of various agencies (criminal justice, protective service, social service, and others) in crisis intervention.

In Chapter Seven, the nature and causes of intimate partner violence are described in detail. Chapter Seven also provides detailed and practical advice on intervening in domestic disputes.

Child abuse and neglect are often first detected by front-line crisis workers. Chapter Eight offers a comprehensive overview of violence

against children and the considerations involved in assessment and intervention.

Chapter Nine details the mistreatment of elderly persons. The many forms of elder mistreatment are described along with strategies for addressing these problems.

Suicide intervention is another challenge faced by on-site interveners. Chapter Ten describes the nature and incidence of suicide and the factors that contribute to suicide and suicide attempts. The section on assessment and intervention offers the intervener a practical guide to aiding the person in crisis.

Criminal justice and social service practitioners are increasingly being called on to intervene in crises and critical incidents in school settings. Chapter Eleven introduces the reader to the prevention of and intervention in violent incidents in schools.

The crisis intervener experiences a great deal of job-related stress due to the difficult, emotionally draining nature of the work. When occupational stress is coupled with everyday stress, the intervener may need assistance to deal effectively with the resultant problems and avoid personal and professional burnout. Chapter Twelve discusses stress and burnout and offers the reader examples of stress reduction techniques.

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Many persons have provided the assistance, support, guidance, and direction that made this book possible. Dr. Michael Brown and Dr. Gregory Morrison provided insightful opinions on some of the issues addressed. Dr. Bryan Byers reviewed the book with the authors and offered valuable suggestions for revisions. Mrs. Gail Carmichael, Administrative Coordinator for the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Ball State University, provided valuable support and assistance. Ms. Nicole Dressel helped us in the editing and final preparation of the manuscript.

CONTENTS

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Chapter 1

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF CRISIS INTERVENTION

As long as there has been suffering, there have been crises. As long as there have been crises, there has been crisis intervention. During most of our existence, crisis intervention was provided by family or kinship group members who would comfort their kin and offer assistance, understanding, and support.

As urbanization and technology advanced, people became more mobile. The kinship group was no longer the basis of social organization. Families became geographically and emotionally separated. Family members could no longer be depended on in times of crisis. The isolation of individuals from traditional sources of comfort and support also made it more likely that they would find themselves in crisis.

A need then developed for someone or something to provide crisis intervention. The need is met in modern societies by religious leaders, medical doctors, social service agencies, and criminal justice agencies.

This chapter will introduce the reader to the concepts of crisis and crisis intervention, especially as they are applied in criminal justice practice. After reading this chapter, the reader should be able to:

1. Describe the origins of crisis intervention programs.
2. Identify early crisis theorists and describe their main ideas.
3. Define and give examples of crises and critical events.
4. List the characteristics of crises.
5. Define crisis intervention.
6. Distinguish between psychological first aid and crisis therapy.
7. Describe the desirable characteristics of crisis workers.

8. Discuss the relationship between crisis intervention and the changing roles of criminal justice practitioners.
9. List critical events and crises encountered by criminal justice practitioners.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Crisis intervention has its origins in efforts to prevent suicide. Early suicide prevention programs began as part of the religious ministries of their founders (Dublin, 1963). In 1906, the National Save-A-Life League was founded by the Reverend Harry M. Warren in New York City, and the Salvation Army of London began its Anti-Suicide Bureau in the same year. Although other such services existed elsewhere, they were few in number, due in part to a lack of understanding of crises and the public stigma associated with suicide.

Programs such as these relied extensively on trained volunteers and student interns (Roberts, 1991), and volunteers continue to be important contributors to crisis intervention efforts. In fact, volunteers are an essential component of some crisis intervention programs. For example, in 1953, the Reverend Chad Varah began the Samaritans suicide prevention program in England, relying almost exclusively on volunteers and lay counselors. The Samaritans were one of the first to offer a round-the-clock telephone service. The goal of Samaritan volunteers is to "befriend" the person in crisis, rather than to offer paraprofessional counseling (see *www.samaritans.org* for more information). The Samaritans have expanded their efforts to forty-one nations, including the United States, as Befrienders International (*www.befrienders.org*).

In the United States after World War II, the public became more aware of the need to provide professional crisis intervention services to emergency and walk-in psychiatric casualties. In particular, the Veterans Administration provided funding for training mental health professionals and providing mental health services to thousands of returning veterans (Wallace, 1995). Support for community mental health programs steadily increased. In 1946, Congress passed the National Mental Health Act to provide a method for financing mental health research and training programs as well as to assist individual states in establishing community mental health centers.

During the next two decades, the number of mental health programs grew, but many more were needed to establish a comprehensive community mental health system. In the late 1950s, Congress called for a thorough study of mental health problems. As a result, the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health (1961) studied the problems and needs related to community mental health and reported their findings to Congress. President Kennedy, in response to the findings, helped provide for the passage of the Community Mental Health Center Act of 1963. As a result of this Act and Public Law 89-749, the individual states received sizable grants with which to begin construction of public mental health centers.

As this groundwork was laid, governmental organizations and private agencies began developing crisis intervention services on a local basis. Norman Farberow and Edwin S. Shneidman (1961) received a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health in 1958 that allowed them to open the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center (LASPC). Their "psychological autopsy" of Marilyn Monroe's suicide in 1962 helped fuel the demand for better suicide prevention services (Wallace, 1995). The LASPC developed the model for suicide prevention that was the basis for programs throughout the United States. Their innovations included the use of 24-hour telephone services and the use of trained volunteers to staff them (Farberow & Shneidman, 1961; Roberts, 1991). The public at large then began to be more accepting of the need for psychiatric emergency first aid such as that provided by telephone hotlines.

In the late 1960s, crisis hotlines appeared that used both professionals and paraprofessional volunteers to assist crisis victims on a 24-hour basis. These telephone helpers handled potential suicide victims, drug abusers, and a host of other people with personal problems. Although the hotlines were generally a program within the community mental health center, many were housed within private crisis intervention agencies. Examples of these private crisis intervention agencies with hotline services include Aquarius House in Muncie, Indiana, and Synergy in Carbondale, Illinois. Both of these agencies began operations during the turbulent, counterculture days of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Hotline agencies enjoyed much freedom and offered a variety of needed services. However, for various reasons, many of these private agencies have closed shop and their services now are delegated to other organizations. The remaining ones, such as Aquarius House and