CRISIS INTERVENTION
IN
CRIMINAL JUSTICE/SOCIAL SERVICE

Fourth Edition

CRISIS INTERVENTION IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE/SOCIAL SERVICE

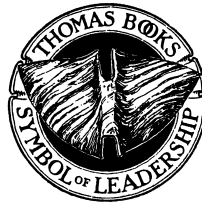*Edited by*

JAMES E. HENDRICKS, Ph.D.

Criminal Justice and Criminology
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

and

BRYAN D. BYERS, Ph.D.

Criminal Justice and Criminology
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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To Cindy
And to all of those who fought and died in Vietnam
5th Marines, Class of 1969

J.E.H.

To Leah and Adam
And my mother and father, Clarisse and Dean Byers

B.D.B.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer R. Arnold, M.P.A., chapter co-author, is a graduate of Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She has over four years experience working with court-ordered juveniles in an independent living treatment facility. Ms. Arnold has also served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), as well as having worked with the Chief Probation Officer of the Delaware County Office of Adult Probation. She is currently assisting in the evaluation of a central Indiana drug court program.

Daniel E. Ashment, M.P.A., chapter co-author, received his Bachelor Degrees in Psychology and Sociology from Utah State University. He also holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration with a Criminal Justice Concentration from Ball State University. He has had extensive security and managerial experience throughout his career.

Bernard E. Blakely, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of sociology at Ball State University and has been director of a number of social service oriented grants. His field experience includes gerontology and consultation. His areas of expertise are applied research in elder abuse and teaching research methodology.

Michael G. Breci, Ph.D., is a professor in the School of Law Enforcement at Metropolitan State University and was formerly a professor of criminal justice at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Dr. Breci has ten years of field experience as a probation and police officer. His publication record, as well as his consulting work, is varied and extensive. In particular, Dr. Breci is well known in the area of police responses to domestic violence.

Michael P. Brown, Ph.D., is a professor of criminal justice and criminology at Ball State University. He holds a doctorate from Western Michigan University in Sociology and has also taught at Utica College of Syracuse University. Dr. Brown's interest in criminal justice and criminal justice education has led to involvement as

a program evaluator and in academic program assessment. In addition to criminal justice education and program assessment, he also has research interests in community-based corrections and intermediate sanctions. Dr. Brown has conducted extensive research in, and has presented on, the topic of ethics and ethical decision making in criminal justice.

Bryan D. Byers, Ph.D., chapter author and volume co-editor, is professor of criminal justice and criminology at Ball State University. His previous teaching experience includes faculty positions at Valparaiso University and the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Byers has published five books in the areas of social psychology, elder abuse, and criminal justice and is the author of over twenty journal articles and thirty national presentations. He also has served as a deputy coroner, an adult protective services investigator, youth leader, and prosecuting attorney field investigator. Dr. Byers' expertise in crisis intervention and death notification includes years of research, in-service training, and experience.

Barbara A. Carson, Ph.D., is a professor of sociology and corrections at Mankato State University. Prior to her service there she was a criminal justice faculty member at Ball State University. During her employment at the University of New Hampshire, as a doctoral fellow under the auspices of the National Institute of Mental Health, and while working at Boy's Town (NB), she conducted research on child abuse and neglect. Dr. Carson continues to conduct research in these areas as they relate to the criminal justice system.

Richard D. Clark, Ph.D., is a professor at John Carroll University near Cleveland, Ohio. His previous teaching experience includes a position on the criminal justice faculty at Bowling Green State University. Previously, he was employed as a project director with a four-year longitudinal project assessing reactions to violent (homicide, suicide and accidents) and natural death. Dr. Clark has extensive experience in the areas of juvenile delinquency and victimization. He has served as a juvenile justice staff member as well as a research analyst. Dr. Clark has published extensively.

Diane M. Daane, J.D., is a professor of criminal justice and criminology at the University of South Carolina at Spartanburg. Prior to her service at Spartanburg she was a criminal justice faculty member at Ball State University and also served as a faculty member at Kearney State College in Kearney, Nebraska. She has worked as a staff defense attorney and provided legal assistance to the U.S.

Department of Justice as well as having served as a halfway house supervisor and correctional caseworker. She has published and presented a number of papers on the subjects of rape reform and the legal aspects of rape.

Dr. Blakely's co-author, **Ronald Dolon, Ed.D.,** is also employed at Ball State University as a professor of social work. In addition to his teaching and research experience, Dr. Dolon has served as an adult protective services investigator, a caseworker for the Department of Public Welfare, and as a school social worker. Currently, he serves as a consultant to various agencies dealing with elder abuse and victim advocacy.

Cindy S. Hendricks, Ph.D., is a professor of education and Interim Associate Dean at Bowling Green State University. A scholar of national reputation in the areas of reading and addressing the affective domain of children's learning, Dr. Hendricks has published numerous journal articles and a book entitled *Sensitive Issues: An Annotated Guide to Children's Literature K-6* (Oryx). Dr. Hendricks is a former Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Reading Forum and is a member of the International Reading and College Reading Associations. She has also presented nationally and has engaged in various consulting capacities. Prior to her service in Bowling Green State University's College of Education, she was a faculty member in education at Ball State University and served for several years in middle and secondary education.

James E. Hendricks, Ph.D., contributor and volume co-editor, is professor and chairperson of criminal justice and criminology at Ball State University. Previously, he was a member of the University of Tennessee and the Southern Illinois University faculties. His field experience includes the positions of police officer, chief deputy sheriff, deputy coroner, director of a victim advocate program, correctional counselor, and mental health worker. In addition, Dr. Hendricks served as a combat marine corpsman in the Vietnam War. His research interests include crisis intervention, law enforcement, and victim advocacy. He has published five books and is the author of fifty journal articles. Dr. Hendricks is a diplomat and certified crisis intervener of the American Board of Examiners in Crisis Intervention. He is also a member of the Education and Training Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Dr. Carson's co-author, **Bruce K. MacMurray, Ph.D.,** is a professor of sociology and criminal justice at Anderson University in

Anderson, Indiana. Dr. MacMurray also has worked as a sociology professor at Northeastern University (Boston, MA), the University of Nebraska, the University of Iowa, and Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Research, grant writing, and consulting work on the topics of ethics, plea bargaining in child abuse cases, and family violence make up his areas of expertise.

Janet E. Mickish, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the Colorado Coalition on Domestic Violence. Her twenty years of field experience includes work in domestic violence and rape/sexual assault crisis intervention. Prior to her service on the coalition she was employed as a criminal justice faculty member at Ball State University. As a result of her teaching, research, and consulting work, Dr. Mickish has enjoyed national recognition.

Veronica L. St. Cyr, M.P.A., chapter co-author is a graduate of Ball State University with degrees in criminal justice and public administration. She is currently working in the security field, is a licensed private investigator, and has worked in adult probation. She has achieved the rank of black belt in tae kwon do and is a 2004 PKC Indiana State and National Champion as well as a 2005 USKA National Champion.

INTRODUCTION

This collection of original works is intended for pre-service and in-service criminal justice and social service crisis interveners. Interveners are those persons who come into contact with victims of domestic violence/spouse abuse, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse and neglect, rape and sexual assault, loss of a loved one or any other type of crisis. Interveners come in many forms–they are firefighters, police officers, social workers, childcare caseworkers, correctional personnel, probation/parole officers, clergy, emergency medical personnel, victim advocates, shelter care personnel, psychological counselors, and professionals from many other criminal justice and social service areas.

The purpose of this book is to provide theoretical, analytical, and practical knowledge for first responders. Face-to-face interaction with the client/victim is part of the comprehensive approach advocated by this book, which requires interveners to assess the nature of a crisis, and the condition of the victim, in order to determine the appropriate course of action.

For the victim, a crisis can be a crossroads of danger and opportunity. Interveners must recognize and respond to that opportunity, providing the necessary support to the victim, who is often in a heightened state of anxiety. Effective communication skills, along with adequate training and preparation for intervention, are keys to quality interaction between the intervener and the client/victim.

Each chapter in this book offers a theoretical overview of a particular facet of intervention, as well as models and methods for applying crisis theory to crisis situations faced by interveners. Although crisis situations are composed of similar elements, each crisis is unique within the personal domain due to individual diversity. The comprehensive balance of theory and practice presented in this volume should enable the intervener in coupling his/her general knowledge of human psychology and emotional crisis with the specific and novel characteristics of various crisis situations.

This volume represents the Fourth Edition of *Crisis Intervention in Criminal Justice/Social Service.* This volume retains important information, in a revised format, from the third edition while adding important and timely topical

information. It is our hope that the reader will find the information valuable in the delivery of crisis intervention within the domains of criminal justice and social services.

JAMES E. HENDRICKS
BRYAN D. BYERS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONTENTS

CRISIS INTERVENTION
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Chapter 1

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

JAMES E. HENDRICKS and BRYAN D. BYERS

INTRODUCTION

The fields of crisis theory and intervention have received considerable research attention during the latter half of the twentieth century (Lindemann, 1944), but the field has not been stagnant given recent crisis intervention scholarship (Gilliland, 1997; Roberts, 2000; Wainrib and Bloch, 1998). The field of crisis intervention has realized a renewed popularity. Many have realized the utility of crisis intervention theory and techniques in responding to crisis events that have adversely impacted individuals within the contexts of disastrous events in our schools and communities. School shootings, acts of domestic terrorism, and natural disasters have all helped us to realize the applicability of crisis intervention skills for those in crisis.

All individuals experience crises in life in response to personal and societal events, and these crises often call for the attention of concerned others. Until recently, our society was composed largely of tightly-knit extended and nuclear families, and assistance was provided by these entities when crises arose. The greater mobility of subsequent generations, however, caused the ties that held families together to unravel. Thus, family members were denied immediate and, many times, long-term contact with supportive persons they had depended on in the past. Therefore, crisis intervention expanded beyond the domain of the family unit becoming professional in nature.

Professionals responded accordingly to the growing demand of crisis-related issues in society and individual responses. The already-established fields of psychiatry, psychology and medicine supplied the earliest forms of assistance (Lindemann, 1944). Later, social service and criminal justice agencies

assumed the bulk of assistance given in this country (Caplan, 1964). Today, criminal justice agencies are important conduits to crisis intervention (Hendricks and McKean, 1995; Romano, 1990).

While the focus of this book is on the relationship between crisis intervention and the substantive fields of criminal justice and social service, it is important to develop a theoretical foundation of crisis theory. Therefore, this chapter begins with a definition of a crisis. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the origins and foundations of crisis theory. We then address the anatomy of individual crisis situations. That discussion is followed by the topic of crisis and community. We follow with important interpersonal communication skills that facilitate crisis intervention. Crisis assessment is then addressed and this is followed by a discussion of the crisis intervention process. The final three topics in the chapter deal with crisis intervention in criminal justice/social services, crisis intervention and cultural diversity, and the government's role in promoting crisis intervention. First, we begin with the definition of a crisis.

DEFINING "CRISIS"

Since crisis intervention has been shown to be effective in countering many types of dangerous emotional and mental reactions, professionals require a sound definition of what a "crisis" is in order to determine when, and where, assistance is needed. It is important to note, however, that a crisis is a response to an event or set of events that occur in a person's life. Crisis producing events are referred to in the literature as "precipitating events" or "hazardous events" (Byers, 1987; Hendricks and McKean, 2001).

The *Encarta World English Dictionary (2001)* defines a crisis as "a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown" and "a time when something very important for the future happens or is decided." Past research seems to support this definition. Both Caplan (1964) and Quierdo (1968) observed the instability of persons in times of crisis. Also, Aguilera, Messick, and Farrell (1970) defined a person in crisis as one who has reached a turning point in his or her life. Repeatedly, these definitions surface, in one form or another, throughout the literature. Drawing on these classical views, Byers (1987) defines a crisis as:

> The unpleasant psychological and social feelings/sensations, which result from the onset of a perceived insurmountable stressful life event, disrupting stability, and accompanied by an inability to adjust or cope. (p. 105)

Since a crisis disrupts stability, change is a natural consequence. Rapoport (1962) and Lindemann (1944) each noted that a crisis usually involves change. Likewise, Erickson (1959) recognized that crisis entails the unexpected, but he extended this definition to include changes that take place naturally during the human growth and aging cycle. Noting the common elements in these definitions, Hendricks (1985) and Hendricks and McKean (1995) derived the following elements that may precede, accompany, or follow a crisis:

- Anxiety and stress produce a hazardous event (crisis).
- The event occurs suddenly and unexpectedly.
- The event may be one single event or a number of events.
- Stress mounts, as the person is unable to effectively cope or solve the problem.
- As a result of overwhelming stress and failure to adequately cope with stress, maladaptive behavior ensues.
- The crisis gains momentum and personality fragmentation occurs.
- As this crisis is occurring, there is increased likelihood that another crisis will occur (a common crisis-producing event is the feeling that "I have failed to cope adequately").
- The crisis victim/survivor moves toward specific types of maladaptive behavior, including criminal behavior.
- If effective intervention does not occur, the crisis victim/survivor reaches a physical and psychological breaking point and permanent damage is likely.

These authors also list the characteristics of those who may be particularly prone to a crisis as a result of unexpected external events or amplified reactions to developmental changes found in life. The reader might bear in mind that these are potential, common social and individual characteristics of those who may experience a crisis, are not necessarily exhaustive, and may be present in those who do not experience crises or hazardous events. The following traits may be referred to as *crisis risk factors:*

- Unemployment, underemployment, or dissatisfaction with one's present occupation or position.
- Drug abuse (including alcohol).
- Difficulty coping with minor problems, i.e., problems encountered by the general population on a daily basis.
- Low self-esteem, persistent feelings of insecurity.
- History of unresolved crises or emotional disorders.
- Underutilization of support systems and minimal access to support systems