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## CRISIS INTERVENTION

### WHAT IS CRISIS INTERVENTION AND WHAT CAN IT ACCOMPLISH?

Gradually or suddenly, life stress can sometimes build up to critical levels, causing serious emotional distress, threatening your safety, preventing you from functioning effectively and stretching your ability to cope to its limit. In these situations, you may not be able to wait days or weeks for a regular appointment to talk with a mental health therapist or counselor. Crisis Intervention (also referred to as "emergency services") is an intensive, short-term way to help people cope with and overcome serious personal crises.

Because a crisis can occur anytime, crisis intervention services are immediately available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They provide an opportunity for you and other important people in your life to find solutions to problems by talking about them with a trained mental health professional. Crisis intervention services can help you understand your difficulties, develop skills to help you cope, and help you access other types of mental health services you may need.

### WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY CRISIS INTERVENTION THERAPIST?

- If you or a family member contact the Center and ask for crisis intervention; or if you contact any of our offices after regular business hours, the person who answers the phone can connect you with a trained crisis specialist. The crisis intervention therapist will listen carefully to understand your situation and needs and will provide caring support and direction to help you discover solutions.
- No matter what you may say or do, your crisis intervention therapist is unlikely to judge you as a person. However, he/she may suggest different ways of behaving or coping with stress.
- Your crisis therapist is primarily concerned about your safety and well-being and that of people around you. For that reason, he/she may ask you questions about whether you're having any thoughts about harming yourself or someone else, about how well you're managing daily activities and about what kinds of alcohol, drugs and medications you may be taking.
- Sometimes crisis situations are so serious that treatment in a psychiatric hospital or some other 24hour treatment facility is necessary to ensure your safety and stabilize your situation. If your emergency services therapist determines that you need such intensive types of care, he/she may help you arrange admission to an appropriate facility. If you go to such a treatment facility, your emergency services therapist or another Counseling Center staff member will stay in touch with the facility to make sure that appropriate mental health services are available to you after you are discharged. After you are discharged, it is extremely important for you to attend any follow-up treatment sessions that your crisis therapist arranges for you.
- In some cases, your emergency services therapist might suggest that you see one of the agency's psychiatrists to evaluate your need for certain kinds of medication to help you feel or function better. However, if you agree to take medication, realize that medications are only for symptom relief. By themselves, they do not solve the underlying problems that often cause the symptoms. If you use medications, it is very important to also continue with any other recommended mental health treatment while you are taking your medication.

- Once the immediate situation is stabilized, your crisis intervention therapist will work toward helping you function better on your own or toward getting you into longer-term treatment to resolve the issues that led to your crisis situation. Your crisis therapist will keep all information about you, even the fact that you're receiving mental health services, in strict confidence. He/she will not share any information about you with anyone outside of The Counseling Center, including your family, without your written permission. The only exceptions would be (a) if you are under 18 years old or a dependent adult (in which case parents or other legal guardians have the right to know about the services you are receiving), (b) if you share information that raises concern about your or someone else's safety or (c) if your emergency services therapist is ordered by a court of law to provide information about you.

### **HOW MUCH TIME DOES EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TAKE?**

Crisis intervention services are brief and time-limited. Sometimes the situation can be stabilized within a single phone call or face-to-face session, but sometimes several contacts may be necessary.

If the issues leading to your crisis are more complex, your crisis intervention therapist may suggest a referral for other more traditional mental health treatment. If this is the case, your crisis intervention therapist will help set those services up for you and will work closely with your other new service providers to make sure they are helpful.

### **HOW CAN I MAKE MY EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SUCCESSFUL FOR ME?**

- To assure that services are as helpful as possible, you will need to be completely honest and open with your emergency services therapist about your experiences, thoughts and feelings. This is especially true when it comes to questions about thoughts you may be having about harming yourself or others or about your use of alcohol, drugs or medications.
- When you're in a crisis situation, don't abuse alcohol or drugs and be sure to take any medications only as prescribed.
- Don't make important life decisions while you're in the middle of a crisis situation. After your crisis situation has stabilized, the crisis therapist can help you weigh your options and make decisions that are best for you.
- Be open to new ways of looking at your problems and new ways of coping with your situation, even if you've never tried them before.
- Don't give up hope. Many times a crisis situation is just the first stage of making important changes that can have a lasting positive effect on your life.
- Don't rely just on crisis services if the issues that led to your crisis situation are longstanding or complex. Crisis services cannot resolve all complex personal problems and should not be used as a substitute for regular, ongoing mental health treatment services.
- Above all, remember that the only person who can make changes happen for you is you. Your emergency services therapist can be a valuable assistant; but, in the end, you are responsible for making your own life decisions.