From 911 to 411 or maybe 211

Unraveling the Conspiracy of CRISIS

Crisis…. Defined

■ The turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or fever. An emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life. The decisive moment. An unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome.

-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

Crisis…. Defined (cont.)

- "A crisis refers to an individual's ability to solve a problem using traditional coping abilities that were successful in the past. The person experiencing a crisis feels helpless and experiences emotional turmoil"

  - Best Practices in Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Crisis.... Defined (cont.)

■ An upset in the person's steady state provoked when an individual finds an obstacle to important life goals.

■ A crisis is a period of transition in the life of the individual, family or group, presenting individuals with a turning point in their lives, which may be seen as a challenge or a threat, a "make or break" new possibility or risk, a gain or a loss, or both simultaneously.

- Caplan, Gerald; Crisis Management in the Community, The Medical Journal of Australia

The "language" of crisis

Crisis Situations

- Money
- Housing
- Substance abuse
- General dissatisfaction
- Legal issues
- Medical issues
- Relationships/Grief
- Threat of danger/harm

The language of crisis (cont.)

- Your reaction to crisis language/ statements is important – Why?

  - The statement may not be true or only

  partially correct.

    - Is the goal for the member to function better with or without you?

    - Short term interventions vs. long term goals aka "Keeping your eyes on the prize"

Anxiety/Decision Making Continuum

- Too low anxiety – Too low motivation to act

- Just right anxiety – Can think, motivate, act

- Too high anxiety – Too upset to think clearly/make good decision

Crisis Response

1. Provider/someone else's vs. member's mistake
2. Does the member have the ability to learn from the experience?
3. Is the harm irreparable?
4. Will time delay cause more damage?
5. Will my intervention undermine or support member in achieving long term goals?
6. Will my intervention hurt or enhance my relationship with the member?*

*It might in the short term, but what about the long term, or will the program's relationship remain intact?

Crisis Based Systems

- MET/PET Teams
- MHUC
- Emergency Rooms
- Bulletproof glass
- Doors with buzzers
- Waiting Rooms
- Security Guards
- Vehicles with light bars
- Staff make decisions

Recovery Based Systems

- Open environment (welcoming, few locked doors)
- Reducing the "us" and "them"
- Relationships replace security (ambassadors)
- Get the power back in the person's hands
- Members make decisions
- Focus on normative activities – employment, community integration, housing, education, dating, etc.
- No person as diagnosis
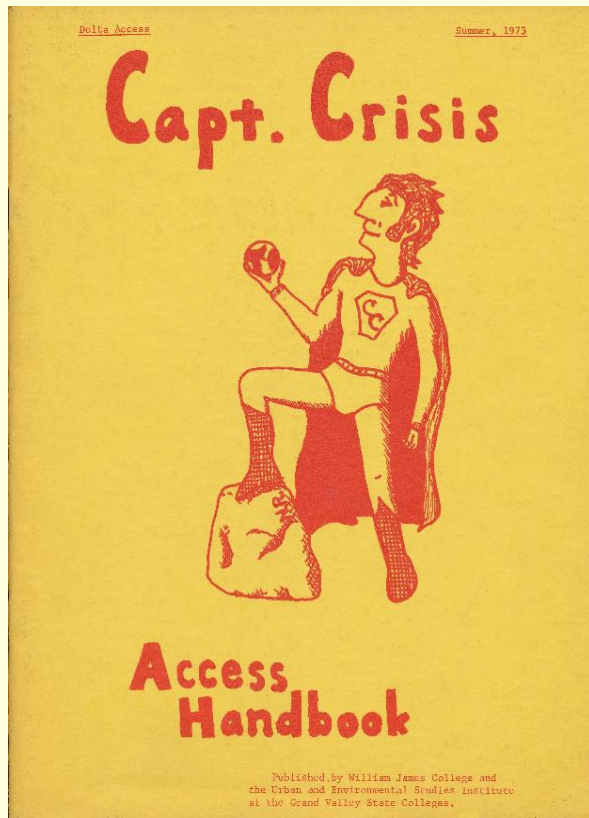- Expect higher level of behavior

Contrast of Interventions

PSR Interventions

1. Maximize member involvement, preference and goals
2. Focus on strengths
3. Preventive, proactive
4. Skills
   Training
5. Member as expert
6. Normalize

Crisis Interventions

1. Staff/policy preference and goals
2. Focus on deficits
3. Reactive
4. Solving problems for client
5. Provider as expert
6. Pathologize

What role do we play in perpetuating a crisis lifestyle?

Delta Access   Summer, 1973

Capt. Crisis

Access Handbook

Published by William James College and the Urban and Environmental Studies Institute at the Grand Valley State Colleges.

- "Crisis Junkie" – both staff and member
- Our need to avoid a feeling of failure if problem not solved immediately.
- Our need to feel successful by solving immediate problems

Recovery view of crisis

- A subjective feeling of panic over a situation that may or may not threaten quality of life.

- An occurrence in which there is a perceived or actual immediate threat of harm or danger to one's quality of life.

- "Crisis is a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds a person's resources and coping mechanisms." (Gillilan and James, 1997)

Handy hints for handling "crisis" situations

1. Take deep breaths
2. Remove person from situation
3. Slow process down
4. Question situation/get information
5. Maybe listening is all that is needed
6. Assist member to discover solution
7. Goal is normative roles
8. Short term vs. long term payoff
9. Proper use of cell phone
10. A chair
Others?

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