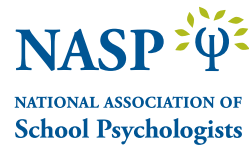




Workshop 2 (3rd Edition, 2019)



4340 East West Highway
Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-657-0270
www.nasponline.org

Handout 33: Delivery of Crisis Intervention

Guidelines for Delivering Crisis Intervention

- Operate only within the framework of an authorized school emergency response system.
- Before you approach an individual or a group, first observe politely.
- Initiate contact only after you have determined that you are not intruding or interrupting.
- Offer practical assistance (food, water). This is often the best way to make contact.
- Ask simple, respectful questions to determine how you may help.
- Remain flexible and adjust to people and their situations as needed. Do not enter the site with any agenda other than providing support.
- Be prepared for those affected by the event to either avoid you or flood you with contact.
- Speak calmly. Be patient, responsive, and sensitive.
- Speak slowly, in simple concrete terms; do not use acronyms or jargon.
- Listen carefully when students or staff members want to talk. Focus on understanding (“getting”) what they want to tell you, and hearing how you can be of help. Children who are too young to speak, or who may not speak clearly, often express their feelings and show what they want through their behaviors, such as play.
- Support and reinforce the person’s individual strengths and coping strategies, including the positive things he or she has done to stay safe.
- Give information that directly addresses the person’s immediate goals, and clarify answers repeatedly as needed.
- Give information that is accurate and age-appropriate. Remember that even very young children need to know what has happened. Tell children the truth, but keep it brief and speak to their developmental level (e.g., avoid discussing the details of a death).
- Reassure young children that the adults are there to protect them and keep them safe. Even when adults do not feel safe, young children need to be assured that everything possible is being done to keep them safe.
- When communicating through an interpreter, look at the person with whom you are talking, not at the translator or interpreter.
- As a crisis intervention team member, reach out to those in positions of authority (e.g., administrators, school resource officers) who have been equally exposed but who, because of their position, need to project a sense of calm and control to those under their care.
- Assist support staff (e.g., custodians, bus drivers, food workers, librarians, secretaries, coaches, instructional aides) whose emotional needs may be overlooked in emergencies. These staff members, who are often involved in directing, calming, and reassuring students and parents, are among the important stabilizing factors in students’ lives.
- Remember that the goal of crisis intervention is to reduce distress, assist with current needs, and promote adaptive functioning, not to elicit details of traumatic experiences and losses.
- Keep in mind that the goal of schools is to support academic achievement. Ask students what they need to be able to attend school every day, to complete their work and succeed in school, and to stay safe in their lives outside of school.

Behaviors to Avoid When Providing Crisis Intervention

- Do not make assumptions about what students and staff have experienced during the incident or are experiencing currently.
- Do not assume that everyone who has been through the emergency will be traumatized.
- Do not pathologize. Most acute reactions are understandable and expectable, given what students and staff have experienced. Do not label reactions as “symptoms” or speak in terms of “diagnoses,” “conditions,” “pathologies,” or “disorders.”

- Do not talk down to or patronize students or staff. Do not focus on the individual's helplessness, weaknesses, mistakes, or disability. Focus instead on what he or she has done that is effective or has contributed to helping him- or herself or others, both during the emergency and in the present setting. Let the student know that continuing to attend school and performing academically shows his or her strength and resilience. Highlight to staff that coming to work every day or taking on additional duties shows their strength, but that it is also okay to ask for help or to ask for some time off to take care of him- or herself.
- Do not assume that all students and staff members want or need to talk to you. Being physically present in a supportive and calm way in itself often helps affected people feel safer and more able to cope.
- Do not "debrief" by asking for details of what happened.
- Do not speculate or give information that might be inaccurate. If you cannot answer a question, say so, and do your best to learn the facts.

Note. Adapted from *Psychological First Aid for Schools: Field Operations Guide* (2nd ed., pp. 12–13), by M. Brymer, M. Taylor et al., 2012, Rockville, MD: National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD. Adapted with permission.