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# Crisis Intervention

## Session 1

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# Crisis Intervention: First Aid for Mental Health

- Crises are inevitable if not predictable
- A crisis is a threat, event or experience that exceeds the person's resources and coping mechanisms
- Typically, crises produce disorganization and disequilibrium



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During disasters, rebuilding infrastructure  
often overshadows the emotional needs of  
people experiencing terror and loss

(Benveniste, 1999)



## Characteristics of Crises

Helplessness, feelings of being overwhelmed, regression, inability to function, sleeplessness, nightmares, flashbacks, confusion

Inability to return to one's normal state



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Crises present us with the need to choose;  
**Inaction is a choice** often with negative results;  
Choosing contains the seeds of growth



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Crises embody danger but they also carry  
opportunity



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There are no quick fixes



## **Psychological crisis: when a traumatic event overloads a person's capacity to cope** (Benveniste, 1999)

- **Some events commonly precipitate psychological crisis reactions. These include physical assaults, torture, rape, automobile accidents, intense personal losses, and natural catastrophes such as earthquake, fire, contagion and flood.**
- **ACUTE STRESS DISORDER -- characterized by feelings of intense fear, helplessness and horror, emotional numbing, a lack of emotional responsiveness, a feeling of detachment, reduced awareness of surroundings, a sense of unreality or amnesia. People suffering an Acute Stress Disorder may feel anxious, excitable, agitated, distressed, despairing, irritable, or hopeless.**
- **Symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder will typically diminish or disappear entirely within 30 days.**





# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

- **ACUTE POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER:** When acute stress disorder symptoms last one to three months
- **CHRONIC POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER:** When acute stress disorder symptoms last more than three months
- **Untreated Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms can persist and have serious effects on a person's life.**



# Elements of a Crisis Sequence (James, 2008)

1. A specific identifiable, stressful, precipitating event
2. The *perception* of the event as *meaningful* and *threatening*
3. *Disorganization or disequilibrium* response resulting from the event
4. *Coping and intervention tasks are involved in resolution*; these actions may be adaptive or maladaptive

# Goals of Crisis Intervention

(Stevens and Ellerbrock 1995)

- 1. To identify, assess and intervene**
- 2. To return the person to his or her prior level of functioning as quickly as possible**
- 3. To lessen any negative impact on future mental health**



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# FIRST CONTACT

(Benveniste, 1999)

- Have a checklist for basic information
- Set patient at ease
- Encourage person to talk
- Listen for what the problem is from their point of view
- Refer to appropriate programs or agencies
- Assess for medical issues

# Sample Checklist

(Benveniste, 1999)

- Name of patient
- Age
- Address
- Family members
- Physical illness or injury
- Medications
- Time of last meal
- Date of last counseling



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## Guidelines for Crisis Workers

(Benveniste, 1999)

- **Counselors Need to Take Care of Themselves and Each Other**
- **Remember to Think Clearly**
- **Counselors Need to Set Priorities**
- **Work Collaboratively**
- **Leave the private practice model behind**
- **Remain Flexible When Working in a Crisis**



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- The time it takes for people to seek help varies greatly
- Always explore the meaning a patient gives to a crisis situation; do not take meaning for granted
- Inquire in an open-ended way about the client's experience

# No Crisis is the Same



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## 主体间心理治疗 理论与个案演示十二讲

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