# VIII. Crisis Counseling

Excerpted from **“Christian** **Counseling”**

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A. Defining the issues

1. A Crisis: "When a problem is overwhelming, or when our support system, either within ourselves or from others doesn't work, we are thrown off balance. This is a crisis" (Wright).

a. The Chinese character for crisis consists of two symbols: danger and opportunity.

b. A crisis is not always bad it can be an opportunity for growth as well as a potential danger.

2. Questions to ask yourself when involved in crisis intervention.

a. How would I feel if I were facing this crisis?

b. What would I do if I were involved in this situation?

B. Common elements of crises (Wright)

1. A hazardous event with potential for pain or a sudden change in the direction of life.

2. A vulnerable state for which coping skills are inadequate.

3. A precipitating factor, "the straw that broke the camel's back".

4. Indications of an active crisis.

a. Symptoms of stress anxiety, depression, psychosomatic illness

b. Attitude of panic or defeat

c. Focus is on immediate relief

d. Lowered efficiency

5. Common reactions to a crisis

a. Denial

b. Anger why me?

c. Bargaining I promise. . .

d. Depression - suffering, loneliness, helplessness, stress, withdrawal, insomnia

e. Accompanying emotions fear, guilt, grief

6. Balancing factors

a. Adequate perception the way the problem is viewed and the meaning it has for the person

b. Adequate network - friends, relatives, agencies

c. Coping mechanisms - rationalization, denial, gaining information, problem solving, decision making, prayer, Bible reading.

C. Phases in working through a crisis

1. The impact phase

a. Usually very brief except in divorce situations

b. Arouses the fight or flight syndrome "Fighting and attempting to take charge again in the midst of a crisis seems to be the healthier response. Running away only prolongs the crisis" (Wright).

c. Thinking ability is lessened.

d. The person reminisces about the loss in proportion to the value of the loss.

2. Withdrawal - confusion phase

a. Decline in emotional level tendency to deny feelings or repress them

b. Person needs help in reorganizing life

c. Tendency toward self-pity

3. Adjustment phase longer period of time

a. Detachment from the lost object approaches completion.

b. New things begin to hold significance.

c. Hope begins to emerge, but fluctuates.

4. Reconstruction - reconciliation phase

a. Hope becomes spontaneous with a new perspective on life.

b. New strength and appreciation emerges.

c. New values for approaching life are devised.

d. A person's attitude in a crisis determines whether it becomes a restrictive, crippling tragedy or a growth-producing experience in spite of the pain.

D. The process of crisis intervention

1. Make immediate intervention

2. Take action that is meaningful, purposeful, and goal-oriented -- distinguish issues that must be attended to immediately from those that can be postponed.

3. Set limited goals to restore the person to a state of balance.

4. Foster hope and positive expectations.

a. Provide adequate information to see the complete picture.

b. Note how the person is interacting with the objective situation.

5. Provide adequate support.

a. Listen to what the other person is saying.

b. Speak for yourself without assuming another's position.

c. Distinguish between thoughts and feelings.

d. Clarify ambiguous issues.

f. Determine what can be resolved and what needs to be postponed for later consideration.

g. Draw on family strengths.

h. Focus on decision making and problem solving.

(1) A decision is the process by which a person selects among two or more alternatives or possible solutions.

(2) Difference between decision making and problem solving.

(a) Decision-making involves choosing among two or more opportunities of equal value.

(b) Problem solving seeks one best solution among unequal options with a known best result.

(3) Steps in decision making

(a) Define the decision to be made.

(b) Determine what is important and why you want to do it.

(c) Examine the information at hand.

(d) Seek new information as needed.

(f) Develop a plan of action.

(g) Make the decision.

(h) After the crisis has subsided, evaluate the effectiveness of the decision.

(4) Steps in problem solving.

(a) Define the problem to be solved.

(b) Set boundaries to limit the problem.

(c) Seek adequate information.

(d) Guide in processing of the information.

(e) Encourage staling and testing possible solutions (hypotheses, scenarios).

(f) After the crisis has subsided, evaluate the effectiveness of the problem solving strategy.

i. Build self-esteem

(1) Conditions for fostering positive self-esteem

(a) Emotional warmth and acceptance

(b) Effective structure and discipline

(c) Encouragement of competence and self-confidence

(d) Assistance during crisis periods

(e) Appropriate role models

(f) A stimulating and responsive environment

(2) Components of self-esteem (Carlson)

(a) Feelings: What do I feel about me? (emotions)

(b) Belief: What do I believe about me? (Convictions)

(c) Values: How much do I value me? (worth)

(d) Perceptions: How do I see myself? (images)