
Parenting Through a Crisis

The Dorm Parent Collective

Objectives

- Differentiate urgent versus non-urgent issues and how to engage each with concern
- Develop strategies for managing crisis situations with your adult child
- Converse & connect with fellow Dorm parents

Defining a Crisis

- A life-threatening situation in which an individual is threatening immediate harm to self or others, is severely disoriented or out of touch with reality, or is otherwise out of control.
- A disruption or breakdown in a person's or family's normal or usual pattern of functioning.
- May be different from a problem or emergency.

Individuals who struggle with emotion regulation can often experience day-to-day or even significant stressors as an emergency. As parents you have probably experienced this of your adult child as well! As clinicians we model and strive to assist clients (and parents) to differentiate between what is a difficult situation or moment and what requires immediate support. By modeling this we empower young adults to cope with life challenges effectively - on their own and/or without clinical support. This often becomes easier for clients throughout their treatment course as they become more skilled.

Differentiating Concerns

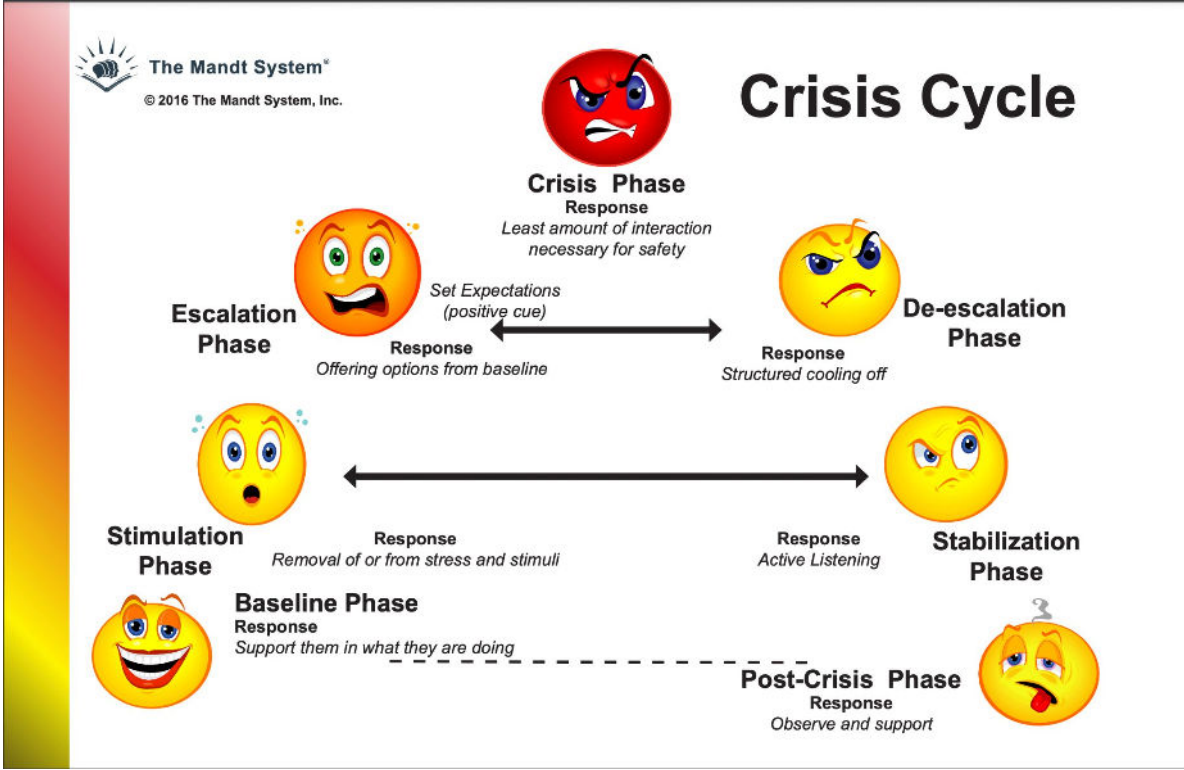
Urgent	Non-urgent
• Threat of harm to self • Threat of harm to others • Suicidal ideation and/or attempt • Physical injury or accident • Psychosis	• Sleep difficulty • Intense anxiety and/or panic attack • Sad feelings • Break up • Difficulty with friends • Urges to use drugs and/or alcohol

****NOT all urgent situations are crisis situations!**

Crisis Development Model

Crisis Development/Behavior Level	Attitude/Approach
Anxiety: Change in behavior. Non-directed expenditure of energy (pacing, withdrawal, finger drum)	Supportive: Be empathic and non-judgemental. Attempt to relieve anxiety (listen, reflect, allow time).
Defensive: Start to lose rationality, belligerent, challenge authority (refusal, shouting).	Directive: To de-escalate, give simple directives and set limits. Break directives into small steps and when you get compliance for a small step it is a good sign that they're back in rational mind.
Risk Behavior: May present a risk to self or others- total loss of control (hitting, self injury).	Safety/Physical intervention: disengage if possible
Tension reduction: Decrease in physical and emotional energy- after escalation when a person begins to regain rational thought- signs of remorse or embarrassment (crying, apology).	Relationship Building: Re-establish communication (listen, debrief).

Crisis Cycle



Tips

- A parent that tries to intervene the wrong way could drive a wedge in the relationships with the child.”
- Show empathy.
- Don't lecture: Pain, Empathy, Question
- In the absence of knowing how to make the situation better, the next best thing is to not make the situation worse.

Supporting

- Regulate your emotions & calm your mind!
 1. Take a deep breath or practice another breathing exercise
 2. Practice self-compassion
 3. Remember the importance of connection
 4. Extend compassion to others
- Practice mindful communication
 1. Non-judgment
 2. Consider nonverbals (esp. body language & proxemics)
 3. Consider paraverbals: tone, volume, rhythm of speech
 4. Active Listening with empathy
 5. Use validating statements

Directive

State of Release: verbal & emotional outburst

- Allow venting
- Facilitate privacy
- Ask for permission or clarity around what kind of support they want from you (this does not mean you are agreeing to that support!)

Refusal: unwillingness to cooperate (ex. Standing in the doorway)

- Set limits. Keep it simple & reasonable

when/then: “when you lower your voice, then we can talk about it.”

Directive

Questioning/Info Seeking: if rational question

→ give a rational response. If unsure, state that & estimate a future date if possible

Questions/Challenging: power struggle

→ Stick to facts. Remind of boundaries or expectations

→ Practice responding vs. reacting (see previous weeks!)

Intimidating: verbally or non-verbally threatening

→ tell young adult you are going to take them seriously.

→ call for help. 988 or 911; on-call line if appropriate

→ seek safety

Relationship building

Control: emotionally regulated & safe

Orient: facts, identify problem behavior

Patterns: are there any patterns?

Investigate: alternatives to the behavior

Negotiate: future approaches/expectations

Give: responsibility, be supportive

Discussion

When is a time your child was in crisis? How did you handle it?
Would you do anything differently?

How do you generally handle a non-urgent concern with your young adult? How do they respond/how have you seen their response change?