

THE BRIDGE

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Handling Crisis

When walking with someone through crisis be okay with them not being okay, be present, listen, and make sure your words are rooted in scripture. Below are some “dos” and “don’ts” in handling crisis.

DON'T

Don't let too long pass before you make contact.

Don't try to minimize the hurting person's pain with comments like:

- “It was probably for the best.”
- “Trust me. It's not as bad as you think.”
- “Well, things could be a lot worse.”
- “I'm sure you'll remarry.”
- “You're young, I'm sure you'll have another child.”
- “You're strong—you'll get over this soon.”
- “God is in control.”
- “All things work together for good.”
- “Everything happens for a reason.”

Comments like these may be your attempt to offer hope (and may even contain truth) but to a hurting person they come across as trite (at best) and grossly insensitive (at worst).

Don't merely say “I'm so sorry,” and end the sentence. Your hurting friend is sorry too, but he/she can't really respond to this statement.

Don't just ask, “What can I do to help?”

DO

Respond promptly with a call, visit, and/or card.

Do offer simple, understanding statements like:

- “This must be incredibly hard for you.”
- “I can't imagine your pain.”
- “I wish I could take the hurt away.”
- “I share your feelings of loss.”

Comments like these demonstrate compassion and sensitivity. You are acknowledging the person's real pain and letting them know it is okay to grieve and feel heartbroken.

Do say, “I'm so sorry...” then add a statement like: “I know how special he was to you.” Or “I'm going to miss her terribly.” Or “I want to help. I'm available all this weekend.” Or “I have been praying almost nonstop for you—is there something specific I can pray for?”

Be proactive and practical in offering to help. Ask yourself, “What would be helpful to me if I were this situation?” Then offer to do specific things like: “Hey, I'm on my way to Super 1. What can I pick up for you while I'm there?” Or “Would tomorrow be a good day for me to come help you with laundry or cleaning?” “I'm great at ironing. Can I come one morning this week and do that for you?” Or “How about if I come and get your kids and take them to eat pizza tomorrow afternoon/evening so that you can have some quiet time?” Most folks in crisis are so overwhelmed they can't think clearly. Or they feel like they are imposing to ask for help.

That's why it's good for you to offer specific ways of helping.

Don't say, "You shouldn't feel that way/say things like that!"

Don't expect unrealistic optimism from your hurting friend.

Don't give in to the urge to offer up empty platitudes or clichés in your own feelings of discomfort and powerlessness to "fix" the hurting person's situation.

Don't overuse phrases like "you should" or say "if only." For example:

- "You should just give those clothes away."
- "You should get back to work and stop thinking about this."
- "You should have more faith."
- "You should read this book."
- "If only you had watched her more closely."
- "If only you had taken better care of yourself."

Don't offer unsolicited advice. If your friend isn't asking for counsel, he/she may not appreciate your suggestions, no matter how well-intentioned.

Don't be critical or judgmental. Don't give a time limit for dealing with grief. Don't say things like:

- "This wouldn't have happened if..."
- "Do you think there might be sin in your life?"
- "You're not trusting God with your feelings."

Don't offer spiritual reasons for why they're facing their situation or tell them that they'll be a stronger person afterwards. We don't know why tragedies happen—why certain people face certain traumas. We do folks a disservice by offering possible explanations.

Do encourage your friend to verbalize their honest feelings. Encourage him/her to journal or write down thoughts. Often just seeing our feelings on paper helps us process grief.

Do realize that your friend's heart is broken and full of pain (and probably confusion and anger and guilt). Let them know you will listen to their feelings and want to share in their suffering.

Do be honest and authentic. Say something like, "I feel so awkward because I don't know what to say or how to help. But here's what I can tell you, 'I love you and I will walk with you through this.'"

Do allow your hurting friend to make his/her own decisions and to process the trauma in his own way/her own time. No one can legitimately tell another person what to feel or not to feel.

Do respond cautiously and sensitively with edifying and helpful ideas when your friend asks for help in dealing with their tragedy.

Do provide, long-term, unconditional support. Let your friend know that everyone processes trauma differently and that you have no expectations regarding how they should navigate their grief. Simply assure them that you'll be there for them.

Do listen empathetically when the individual shares his/her feelings of bewilderment, confusion, etc. Say something along the lines of, "I don't understand either; it is hard to make sense of it all."

Don't pressure your friend to "cope better" or "get back to your old self." This may only hinder their recovery or ability to process their loss.

Don't use the Bible to correct or minimize the other's feelings. An attempt to comfort may actually prompt feelings of condemnation! Never offer spiritual suggestions from a position of superiority or out of a mindset that says, "I can and need to straighten this person out!"

Don't feel pressured to perform tasks that you really don't want to do or feel qualified to do.

Don't say, "I totally understand," when you haven't faced the same situation. Telling someone that everything will be okay, when you have never known the depth of their pain, is an empty and disingenuous statement. And resist the urge to tell horror stories of other people you know who've been through similar trials.

Don't ignore them after the immediate crisis has passed.

Do allow all the time they need to deal effectively with all the phases of their grief.

Do give spiritual encouragement from your heart. Share appropriate verses that have ministered to you in times of sorrow or loss.

Carefully consider your gifting and how you are wired. Be creative. Your creative efforts to encourage and help will minister to your hurting friend.

Be honest about your experiences. If you haven't faced what your friend is facing, say that: "I can't begin to know what all you must be feeling, but I want you to know that I love you and will support you through this difficult time. If you HAVE faced a similar situation, share about it briefly, and say that you can empathize. But again, don't say, "I know exactly how you feel," because you don't. You're not that person and you don't have his/her background, personality, etc.

Stay in touch, letting them know you are thinking of them and praying for them. Call. Invite for coffee. Ask, "How are you doing—really?" And then listen. Send encouraging notes, text messages, emails.

If the crisis involves immediate danger to the person or another or involves the abuse of a minor use the Groups Crisis Contact List. Each person on this list can walk you through next steps. If you cannot reach someone on the call sheet call 911 to report the situation.

Counseling Agencies/Medication Management/Helping Resources in the Ruston/Lincoln Parish Areas

Counseling Agencies/Doctors/Psychiatrists:

- *Center for Counseling and Psychological Resources** - 318-224-7223 (will take all forms of insurance has will conduct assessments for students that have made threatening statements prior to returning to school)
- *Ascent (formerly known as Wraparound)** – 318-654-4245 (takes Medicaid/will work with other insurance and will assist with Crisis Assessments)
- *The Center for Children and Families** – 1-866-398-0945 (takes Medicaid - has a Crisis Team available)
- Family New Life** – 318-325-8050 (takes Medicaid)
- LA Tech Psychology/Counseling Services** – 318-257-3410 (sliding fee scale)
- Ruston Mental Health** – 901 White Street, Ruston – 318-251-4150; **Crisis Number** – 1-800-256-2522
- Child Adolescent Response Team (CART)** – 1-866-426-4414 (referrals to children and adolescent services in crisis)/318-362-3339
- Cognitive Development Center** – 318-202-5922 (take Medicaid)
- Connections Counseling Center** – 318-450-3405 (private insurance accepted)
- Family Solutions Counseling Center** - 318-255-2922 (private insurance and Medicaid accepted)
- Superior Counseling Services** – 318-242-0730/1-877-674-8483 (takes Medicaid)
- Transitions Counseling & Development Center** – 318-361-4482 (takes Medicaid)
- Rehabilitation Services of Northeast Louisiana** – 1404 S. Vienna St. Ruston, 318-202-3706 (take Medicaid)
- Liberty Healthcare** – Psychiatric inpatient services -- 1-888-605-5244 (takes Medicaid & private insurance)
- Dr. David Williams, Psychologist** - 1401 Royal Avenue, Monroe, LA 318-998-3511 (takes private insurance)
- Dr. Herbert Vandenburg, Psychiatrist** – 615 S. Trenton, Ruston – 318-251-2322 (takes Medicaid & private insurance)
- Family Counseling at the Methodist Children's Home** – 901 S. Vienna St. Ruston – 318-255-5753 (has grants, takes private insurance, and has a sliding fee scale)
- Strategic Counseling Solutions** - 318-255-7312 (takes private insurance)
- Emerson Centre** – 318-251-9100 (non-profit/takes Medicaid)
- Macro Group Counseling Services** – 318-325-7725 (takes Medicaid)
- Seedlinks Behavioral Management** - 318-626-5597 (takes Medicaid)

Crime Victim Assistance – (The Louisiana Crime Victims Reparations Program will award payments for medical expenses, funeral expenses, lost earnings, counseling and child care when they are related to a violent crime.) – 318-251-5111

Pine Hills Advocacy Center (for victims of sexual abuse/assault) – 255-7273/Hotline-1-800-869-1033 (services are free – counseling and forensic interviews)

DART (Domestic Abuse Resistance Team) – 251-2255/1-888-411-1333

Charter Brentwood (Inpatient and Outpatient Counseling) – In Shreveport 1-877-678-7500; In Monroe 325-0897 (takes Medicaid & private insurance)

Ruston Addictive Disorders Clinic – 318-251-4125 (free services)

Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous – 318-513-9111 (free support groups)

Most Pediatricians/Physicians will also prescribe medications and/or make referrals as necessary for counseling and psychiatric medication management issues.

Helping Agencies:

Kidline/Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana – 1-800-244-5373 or 1-800-CHILDREN (hotline for children to report domestic abuse/child abuse)

Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) – 318-362-3396 (supportive services and respite care for those with disabilities)

United Way of Northeast Louisiana – 318-232-0055 or 211 resources assistance line

National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) – 1-800-950-6264/Ruston Office – 318-247-3982 (informational resource)

Housing Authority – Grambling – 318-247-6035

Housing Authority – Ruston – 318-255-3644

City of Ruston Section 8 Housing – 318-251-3203

Lincoln Parish Section 8 Housing – 318-255-9867

North Central LA Habitat for Humanity – 318-255-5561

Hope Center for Autism – 318-255-4232 (offers support and resources for those with Autism)

Big Brother/Big Sister Program of Northeast Louisiana – 318-323-9034 (offers mentoring for children in need)

Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Louisiana – 318-255-2242 – www.bgcncl.org (after school programs, tutoring, summer camps/summer feeding programs)

LA CHIP – LA Department of Health and Hospitals – 1-877-2LACHIP, www.LACHIP.org (healthcare benefits for ages 0-19 years)

Lincoln Parish Health Unit – 318-251-4120 (immunizations, health services)

Lincoln Parish Family Resource Center – 318-255-7635 (offers information about assistance and available resources in the area)

Lincoln Parish Office of Family Support – 318-251-4105 (food stamps, welfare, childcare assistance)

Lincoln Parish HELP – 304 North Homer St., - 318- 251-5136 (assists with transportation, utilities, rent, basic needs)

Lincoln Parish Public Transportation – 318-251-5138 (cost \$4 each way and reservations must be made 24 hours in advance)

Medical Transportation – 1-800-259-7235 (takes Medicaid)

Little Helpers, Pediatric Day Health Center, LLC, - 318-202-5949

Lion's Club – <http://www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/rustonla/indx.php> (assists people with getting glasses)

Salvation Army – 318-254-8777 (food assistance, thrift store, bill assistance)

Rolling Hills Ministries – 318-251-0065 (thrift shop and disaster support)

Department of Children and Family Services – 318-251-4101 Hotline – 1-888-278-1271

LSU Ag Center – 318-251-5134 – www.lsuagcenter.com – (parenting classes, youth development)

Prescription Assistance – St. Vincent dePaul Community Pharmacy – 318-287-7868

Families Helping Families – 318-361-0487 (resource and informational agency)

Louisiana Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health – 1-800-224-4010

Department of Juvenile Justice – 318-362-5262 (juvenile probation)

Families in Need of Services (FINS)/Drug Court – 318-255-4691 (in home parent/child mediation services)

Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program – 1-800-CAMP-KID/1-800-226-7543
www.ngycp.org/state/la

Mount Grace Teen Challenge Training Center – 564 Braxton Rd., Dodson, LA 71422, 318-648-2426
www.louisianateenchallenge.com

Life Choices – 211 W. Texas, Ruston, - 318-255-7377 (counseling, parenting skills training)

The Community Assistance Resource Line (a resource hotline for information regarding suicidal youth)
1-877-778-2275

Truancy – 251-3049/513-6381

Angel Food Ministries – 318-255-8942 (low cost food resource)

Christian Community Action – 108 Bonner Street, Ruston, 318-251-1951 (clothing, household items, food pantry)

North Louisiana Legal Assistance – 318-323-8851

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) – 318-368-2849

Well Springs/Family Justice Center – 318-998-6030/318-355-1505 (provides support/counseling/mentoring/from birth on up/victimization program)

Our House – 318-345-5556 (center for runaway teens and teens in crisis for a variety of ages)

If money is an issue most of these providers take Medicaid/Medicare and/or having a sliding scale. Some offer free services. It is important to call the individual agency for further information. Some of them assess the sliding scale based on family income.