

## Lesson 10

# Counseling in Times of Crises

*Crises Intervention*

*Instructor:*

*Dr. Ancel Presnell, Jr*

## I. Introduction: Understanding Crisis Counseling

### A. Crisis Counseling is Unique

- It is **not** simply a compact version of long-term counseling.
- **Time is a major issue** and driving force in this process.
- The **first seventy-two hours** following a crisis are critical and will have a long-term impact.

### B. Key Differences (Crisis vs. Long-Term Counseling)

- **Goal:** Restore emotional equilibrium & deal with immediate problem resolution (Crisis) vs. Long-term growth & working through long-standing conflicts (Long-Term).
- **Focus:** Immediate, conscious (Crisis) vs. Past, present, future, unconscious (Long-Term).
- **Style:** Directive, early confrontation of unrealistic perspectives (Crisis) vs. May be nondirective, exploratory (Long-Term).

## II. The Foundation: Rapid and Accurate Assessment

Effective intervention begins with **rapid and accurate assessment**. This process must quickly gain an understanding of the current situation, the person's emotional strengths, and available resources.

### A. The Precipitating Event

- Identify the recent event. Is it getting better or worse? Is there a more stressful event in the background?

## B. The Counselee's Perception

- The **crisis is the result of the interaction between the person and the event**, not the event itself.
- Clarify what the person perceives as **danger** or **loss**.
- Challenge unrealistic messages they are giving themselves (e.g., "I will never be loved, accepted, nor happy again").
- **Scriptural Wisdom on Understanding:**

**Proverbs 20:5:** *"Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out."*

## C. Assessment for Safety (First Things First)

- Ask specific, direct questions, such as about **suicidal/homicidal feelings**. This is part of assessing for **Potential Maladaptive Adjustment**.

## III. Crucial Principles of Intervention

Intervention begins at the point of contact, with the first seventy-two hours being critical, and the process usually occurring over a four-to-six-week span.

### A. See the Person Immediately

- **Availability is part of the intervention.** Arrange to be with that person immediately, even if you do not know what to do or say.
- **Modeled by Jesus:**
  - To the Roman soldier regarding his servant: "I will come and heal him."
  - To the Jewish official whose daughter died: "So Jesus arose and followed him."

### B. Allow Expression of Feelings Within Limits

- It is very helpful for the counselee to be able to **share these feelings** with another person who understands.
- Do not try to minimize, ignore, or wrestle the pain away from them.
- **Scriptural Comfort:**

**Matthew 5:4:** *"Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."*

- Allow the person to mourn but eventually **move the session beyond emotion-only and into problem and action.**

### C. Focus on the Here and Now

- It is easy to drift back into discussion of former events and experiences, but this becomes a substitute for dealing with the current crisis.
- Stay focused on the here and now.

### D. Define Goals and Plan of Action

- One of the most valuable contributions is to move people into **action.**
- The goal is to help the person develop a plan of action with **clearly defined, specific, and attainable goals.**
- **A small step is better than no step at all.** Action fuels the adjustment process and can renew hope.
- **Modeled by Jesus (Action from Faith):**
  - He told the lame to take up their beds and walk (Mark 2:11).

### E. Generate Hope

- Without hope, motivation and drive soon are replaced with apathy and discouragement. If there is any reasonable cause for hope, it is helpful to convey the expectation of a successful outcome.
- You do not want to convey a false sense of hope.
- Help the client look far into the future; the crisis will not last forever.
- **Scriptural Admonition:**
  - **Proverbs 13:12:** "Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life."

## IV. Conclusion: Utilizing Resources

### A. Utilize Additional Resources

- Do not try to be the hero and walk a client through the crisis alone. **A network of people helpers is a powerful resource.**
- Help the counselee activate their own **social network** (family, friends, church, etc.).
- Caring people are the greatest resource in most crises.

## B. Clarify Expectations

- Ask the counselee about their expectations of you and what they are wanting.
- You should tell the person what you as a helper are willing and able to do and not do.
- The principle should be to **assist, but not to do something one could do for oneself.**
- The model of the Holy Spirit's comfort is of **one who comes alongside to help** through the situation, not remove it.

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