Chapter 1 Approaching Crisis Intervention

Crisis:
- Definition of Crisis - a perception or experiencing of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms.
- No relief - potential for severe affective, behavioral, and cognitive malfunctioning.
- Danger or Opportunity
- Not simple
- Anxiety is always present and its discomfort provides an impetus for change.
- People in crisis are generally amenable to help.
- Crisis requires a choice to do something - not to choose is a choice.
- Disequilibrium or disorganization accompanies every crisis.
- Crisis in universal - no one is immune given the right set of circumstances.

Types of Crises:
- Developmental
- Situational - Uncommon & extraordinary events - no way of forecasting or controlling. (Auto accident, kidnapping, rapes, job loss)
- Existential - Inner conflicts that accompany human issues of purpose, responsibility, independence. (Realizing that one did not do what they wanted)
- Environmental - Natural or human caused disaster.

Trans-crisis States:
- Crises are time limited, max of 6-8 wks.
- *What occurs in the immediate aftermath of the crisis event determines whether or not the crisis will become a disease reservoir that will be transformed into a chronic and long-term state.
- The original crisis event may be repressed (unconscious)
  o but the appearance of new stressors brings the person to the crisis state again
  o dynamically this pattern is defensive repression and this trans-crisis state calls for crisis intervention techniques.
- The key element of a trans-crisis state is that the state is residual and recurrent, always present despite the person being able to function at some minimal level.
- The implication for the crisis worker: when the individual in crisis is assessed, put emphasis not only in the current clinical/diagnostic state of the individual, but also on the repetitious cycle of problems & historical precursors that may cause the crisis to arise.

Theories of Crisis and Crisis Intervention:
- Basic Crisis Intervention Lindemann - recognized that behavioral response to crises associated with grief are normal, temporary, and amenable to alleviation through short-term intervention techniques.

Stages: Disturbed equilibrium
  Brief therapy or grief work
  Client’s working it through
  Restoration of equilibrium
Caplan - Father of Modern Crisis Intervention.
- Linked Lindemann’s work to all developmental and situation events
- Extended crisis intervention to eliminating the affective, behavioral and cognitive distortions that precipitated the psychological trauma in the first place.

Chapter 2 – Culturally Effective Helping

Multicultural Perspectives
- People share a common measure of “normal behavior”
- Individuals are the basic building blocks of all societies.
- The definition of problems can be limited by academic discipline boundaries
- Western culture depends on abstract words
- Independence is valuable and dependencies are undesirable
- Formal counseling is more important than natural support systems surrounding a cline
- Everyone depends on linear
- Counselors need to change individuals to fit the system
- The client’s past has little relevance to contemporary events
- Counselors and crisis workers already know all their assumptions

Shortcomings of a Multiculturalist Approach to Crisis Intervention
- Current theories of counseling psychotherapy and crisis intervention are inherently biased and oppressive
- Cultural competency practices are too exclusive
- Literature on multicultural competencies has not been subjected to peer review

Culturally Effective Helping
- Little is known about how culture, crises, and crisis intervention interact
- Minorities utilize mental health services much less than members of the majority.
- Ethnic minorities tend to suffer more in a disaster than the majority group
- Deeply entrenched patterns for understanding, perceiving, and interpreting events appear to govern and produce emotions and behaviors that may ultimately lead to conflicts and problematic and destructive crises

Aspects of an Effective Multicultural Counselor
- Examine and understand the world from the client’s viewpoint
- Search for alternative roles that may be more appealing and adaptive to clients from `different backgrounds
- Help clients from other cultures make contact with and elicit help from indigenous support systems
- Respect the values and expectations of the client
- Avoid stereotyping or labeling client’s behavior and/or culture.
- Avoid uni-modal counseling approaches

Multicultural Issues in Outreach
- Conducting an intervention on territory unfamiliar to the counselor.
- Assessments are difficult
- Confidentiality is problematic
Chapter 4 – Crisis Case Handling

Eric Lindemann and Gerald Caplan

- Coconut Grove Nightclub Fire - 11-28-42
  - 493 people perished
  - Lindemann & others from Mass. General Hospital played an active role in helping survivors who had lost loved ones that day.
  - Belief arose that clergy & other community caretakers could help people with grief work - NOT just psychiatrists.
  - Lindemann & Caplan established a community wide program of mental health in Cambridge, Mass that became known as the Wellesley project.
  - Their work began with references to the personal reactions of individuals to traumatic events such as sudden bereavement or the birth of a premature child.

- Caplan’s focus on preventive psychiatry attempted
  - early intervention to promote positive growth and
  - to minimize the change of psychological impairment, led to an emphasis on mental health consultation.

- Much of the current-day crisis intervention theory has come from this Wellesley project.

- Brief, Solution Focused Therapy - Attempts to remediate more or less ongoing emotional problems.

- Expanded Crisis Theory:
  - Psychoanalytic Theory - Used to help clients develop insight into the dynamics and causes of their behavior as the crisis situation acts on them.
  - Systems Theory - Sees value in looking at crises in their total social and environmental settings - not just as one individual being affected in cause-effect events.

- Adaptational Theory - Based on the premise that the person’s crisis will recede when maladaptive coping behaviors are exchanged for adaptive ones.

- Interpersonal Theory - Based on the premise that personal state of crisis cannot be sustained for very long if one becomes self-actualized and operates out of an internal locus of control.

- Chaos Theory - A theory of evolution; it is open-ended, every changing, self-organizing. A new system may emerge out of the crisis.
  - An underlying order emerges within what was previously perceived as chaotic.

Crisis Intervention Models:

- Equilibrium - People in crisis are in a state of psychological/emotional disequilibrium. Their usual coping mechanisms & problem-solving methods fail to meet their needs. GOAL - Recover a state of pre-crisis equilibrium.
  - Most appropriate for early intervention when the person is out of control, disoriented & unable to make appropriate choices

- Focus - Stabilizing the individual.

- The Cognitive Model - Based on the premise that crises are rooted in faulty thinking about the events or situations that surround the crisis - not in the facts about or the events themselves.
  - Goal - Help people become aware of & to change their views and beliefs about the crisis events/situations. Most appropriate after the client has been stabilized and returned to an approximate state of pre-crisis equilibrium.
  - Basic tenants found in the RET work of Ellis.

- Psychosocial Transition Model - Assumes people are products of their genes plus the learning they have absorbed from their particular social environments.
Goal - Collaborate with clients in assessing internal & external difficulties & to help them choose workable alternatives.
Most appropriate after the client has been stabilized & returned to an approximate state of pre-crisis equilibrium.

Eclectic Crisis Intervention Theory:
- Intentional & systematic selections and integration of valid concepts & strategies from all available approaches. A hybrid.
- 2 Themes
  - All people and all crises are unique and distinctive
  - All people & all crises are similar
- This is not a therapeutic shotgun approach aimlessly blasting away at the crisis.
- It means being well versed in a number of approaches & theories.

Effective Crisis Workers:
- Whole person
- Rich and varied background of life experiences
- Emotional maturity
- Training
- Stable & consistent
- Well integrated in crisis situation, but also in daily life.
- Not necessary to have lived in the crisis
- Utilizes supervision effectively.
- Professional Skills
  - Poise
  - Creativity & Flexibility
  - Energy
  - Quick Mental Reflexes
- Others
- Successful resolution of the crisis results in:
  - helping the client overcome the crisis
  - effecting positive change in the helper as a result of the encounter.
  - How well we live depends on our ability to handle the problems that confront us when we least expect them.

Multicultural Perspectives
- Self-knowledge about cultural biases.
- Knowledge about different cultures.
- Skills to effect culturally appropriate interventions.
- Actual experience in counseling and crisis intervention with culturally different clients.
See case study of the Benefield Family, Chapter 14.

Chapter 15 Off the Couch and into the Streets
- Crisis Intervention as emerged into a major human services subspecialty.
- Reactive approach is not enough - proactive and preventive modes are needed.
- Crisis work NEED NOT be the work of the MH professional only.
- There is a need for training.
- There is a societal and job-related need for crisis interventionists.
Prevention Programs:
- **Primary** - Intentional and proactive planning of strategies and activities to keep specific crises from developing.
- **Secondary** - Strategies designed to intervene in a particular crisis category early enough to contain &/or ameliorate the problem.
- **Tertiary** - Comprehensive use of crisis intervention strategies to contain and control the spread of the crisis. Telephone hotline for suicidal people.

Debriefing the Crisis Worker
- Crisis intervention is complex and chaotic.
- Must understand & evaluate the usefulness of their interventions, explore alternative, plan future courses of action.
- Must analyze how they operate as a member of a group/utilize supervision.
- Must explore their personal issues that may intrude into their crisis intervention, deal with countertransference.
- Confidentiality - acts of commission or omission; issues of responsibility or integrity, questions concerning life-and death decisions.
- The debriefer has to make psychological sense of what is going on and to help the crisis worker gain that knowledge.
- The debriefer needs to summarize and allow people to verbalize what they have learned from the crisis and the debriefing, in order to minimize workers’ vulnerability to the phenomenon of vicarious traumatization. Crisis workers need to:
  - have a sense of mastery over what they have done,
  - feel positive about themselves as they leave the traumatic event and the debriefing, and
  - be able to “have a life”.

Chapter 16 Disaster Response

Ecosystemic Crisis Intervention and the Multicultural Imperative

“The ecological, contextual model of crisis intervention, based on ecosystem theory that has emerged on the international scene, is characterized by continuously accelerating events in dynamically changing cultures and environments”. Events impacting this: 9/11, World Trade Center destruction, Pentagon attach, crashed airliner in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building, school violence – the list can go on for pages.

Ecosystem Crises - one that reaches out and pervades at a minimum the community and perhaps whole regions or nations. See Figure 14.1, Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecosystemic Model for Crisis:

• Microsystem – the setting in which the person in crisis lives. Mesosystem – the communications channel, pathway, or interactive mechanism between components in the microsystem and the exosystem in Bronfenbrenner’s developmental system. The total communications network that allows all individuals and groups within each ecological system to exchange information.
• Exosystem – exposes the crisis client or clients to experiences in a wider social setting than those encountered in the microsystem context; includes legal and social welfare services, local mass media, all governmental agencies and programs.
• Macrosystem – the national governments and all its agencies, national charitable, religious, service, professional and benevolent organizations; national rail, air, marine, and highway transportation; food, fuel, energy transmission systems.
• Chronosystem – patterning of environmental events and transactions over the life span as well as the social historical circumstances that influence the individual, family peers, coworkers, and others. Has societal impact.

Defining Principles of a Crisis Intervention Ecosystem:

• Systems must be interdisciplinary.
• The system must be multi-theoretical.
• Individuals are part of the eco system.
• Multiple contexts must be considered.
• Time is of the essence.
• Meaning is important. Parsimonious (prudent, thrifty) interventions are needed.
• The process is cooperative, collaborative and consultative.
• There are a full range of targeted interventions aimed at individuals, institutions, communities, on up to the national level depending on how widespread the crisis is.

The major aim of ecological contextual crisis intervention:

“…. is to support individuals, groups, and communities in the creation of an environment in which their own actions and developmental potential can help stabilize the trauma of a large-scale or megacrisis and restore a reasonable degree of equilibrium to the clientele of the system.”