

A Guide for Navigating Crisis: Remaining Functional in the Acute Phase

Navigating a crisis can be overwhelming. Whether it's a loved one suddenly falling ill, a legal predicament, or any other unexpected upheaval, it's essential but can be a challenge to approach the situation with a clear, compassionate mindset. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you stay strong and function during the acute phase of the crisis.

1. Acknowledge You're In Crisis Mode

Your brain reacts to crisis by switching to survival mode. This might manifest as *foggy thinking*, *forgetfulness*, or *disorientation*.

Understand that these responses are normal, not a reflection of your competence or strength. Your immediate priorities should be:

- Grounding and soothing your body
- Trying to be gentle with yourself.
- Supporting those who depend on you (e.g., children).
- Identify where you and other people are in the '[Rings of Care](#)' and be present for the person at the center of the crisis.

2. Managing Time in Crisis

In crisis situations, time can seem to compress, creating a sense of urgency and pressure to make immediate decisions. Remember:

- **You often have more time than you think.** Breathe, slow down, and don't rush into decisions.
- **Prioritize tasks.** Not everything needs to be handled right away. Identify what's truly urgent and what can wait.
- **Outsource To A Second Brain:** If you are struggling to figure out what's important, that's normal. Bring in a trusted people to help you navigate. They might help you make a list of what's important.
- **It's okay to ask for time.** Whether from medical professionals, legal advisors, or others involved in the crisis, it's generally acceptable to request time to think, consult, or simply process information.

3. Self-Care is Key

It's crucial to care for your basic needs, even in a crisis. Often when we are in survival mode paradoxically forget to do the basics.

Here is a list of the basics to check yourself against, written in a very rough descending order:

- **Have I eaten recently?** Food is important. Doesn't have to be "healthy". Calories > No Calories.
- **Have I drank water recently?** Hydration affects all of our bodies systems, drink up.
- **Have I taken all my prescribed medications?** Following prescribed medication schedules helps keep yourself in balance.
- **Have I slept?** Sleep is vital – try to rest when you can, even if it's not your usual sleep schedule.
- **Do I have the desire to try a new risky activity?** This is not the time to get up on a ladder, or take up water skiing.
- **Have you bathed or changed clothed recently?**
- **Have you moved your body in some way recently / have you felt the sun on your skin?**

Often when a person is in crisis they won't keep track of these basics. Three strategies to support:

1. **Ask "Rev. Sean's Dumb Questions":** Ask the above questions saying, these are what Rev. Sean calls his dumb questions, they seem basic but in moments of crisis they can be helpful to identify gaps.
2. **Don't ask, provide.** Don't ask if you can bring over food, just do (don't get attached if they don't eat it). Don't ask, can I get you some water, ask: "Do you want some water or some juice?".
3. **Make a list/ schedule.** Help distill what needs to happen in the immediate term (which includes self-care) into a checklist or schedule.

4. Caring for Kids & Other Dependents

If you have children or other dependents, they will likely be affected by the crisis too. They need to know they are loved, safe, and that it's okay to express their feelings.

- **Be honest, but sensitive.** Adjust your explanation to match their age and emotional maturity.
- **It's okay to let them see your emotions.** Showing vulnerability helps them understand it's normal to feel sad or worried.
- **Discuss coping strategies for when you're all feeling low.** This can involve family activities, individual hobbies, or seeking support from outside sources.

- **Don't hesitate to ask for help with childcare.** This could be from trusted friends, family, or your community. Rides to and from activities, playdates, or simply giving you some time alone can be invaluable during this time. It not only helps you but also ensures your dependents continue to have positive experiences and stability during this difficult period.

5. Reach Out for Support

The number one mistake people make waiting to bring in support. It's better to be over supported than under supported. Coping with a crisis can be isolating, but remember you're not alone. Reach out to friends you trust, who can handle complexity and provide support. Share as much or as little detail as you're comfortable with.

- **Try to contact at least two people**, preferably one who isn't closely connected to the person in crisis who can be your personal support person.
- **Share your situation with your spiritual community.** If you are part of a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious institution, they want to know if you are in crisis. It's not a burden to them; being present and providing resources during times of difficulty is a fundamental part of their role. They can offer a range of assistance, from counseling to community support and prayer groups.
- **It's okay to seek professional help.** Therapists, support groups, and hotlines can provide valuable resources during a crisis.

6. Guiding Mindsets/ Mantras

1. This crisis won't last forever.
2. As bad as it is right now, it won't always be like this.
3. You don't have to do it alone.

It's crucial to be kind to yourself, seek support when needed, and remember that it's okay not to have all the answers.

Revision #4

Created 2024-03-19 17:02:55 CET by Rev. Sean Neil-Barron

Updated 2024-09-13 21:03:58 CEST by Rev. Sean Neil-Barron