



# Quarterly Update

## Campus Crisis Intervention

There is no doubt that college students are under tremendous amounts of stress—living independently for the first time; striving for good grades; balancing work, school, and new friends. Sometimes the pressure gets to be too much. How can postsecondary faculty and staff help a student who is seemingly in crisis? The following tips are provided by **Dr. Maggie Gartner**, the Executive Director of Texas A&M University's Student Counseling Service.

- Remember that a crisis is **time-limited**. This means a crisis pushes a person toward some type of resolution. A crisis is generally framed within a **6-week period**, but could be longer or shorter based upon the student's resources and ability to cope.
- During a crisis, a person's **habits and coping patterns are suspended or overwhelmed**, and s/he is especially **open to learning** new methods of coping.
- There is sometimes a **rise of energy** during the crisis, signified by **emotional turmoil** that, if focused and directed, can be **used for crisis resolution**.
- **You see the person as having strengths**. These should be emphasized, e.g., the individual was coping until now, even if mal-adaptively.

## What To Do

### I. Listen

- Make contact with the person at the feeling level rather than factual level.
- Identify the person's feelings.
- Accept the person's right to feel that way.
- Reflect back to the person what you are feeling or experiencing.

### II. Explore the problem in the NOW

- Focus on the last four to six weeks.
- Try to identify a precipitating event, but note that there isn't always one.
- Avoid asking a lot of questions. If you do ask questions, make them open-ended. Ask the person to be concrete and specific when answering.

### III. Define the problem

- Make sure that you both agree on what the problem really is. Keep in mind that "the" problem is usually the one that is causing the person the most pain.
- Focus on the problem or a small part of the problem that has the greatest likelihood of some immediate action-producing results.

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#### IV. Explore Resources

- Ask the person **what** he or she:
  - \* has done so far to resolve the conflict.
  - \* would like to do to resolve the conflict.
  - \* might be afraid of doing.
- Ask the person **who** he or she:
  - \* has talked to about the problem.
  - \* would like to talk to about the problem.
  - \* is afraid to talk to about the problem.

#### V. Contract

- Agree on a plan of action to resolve the crisis with the person. **Be specific.**
- Specify goals.
- Plan and schedule a time for follow-up.

### Dealing with the Student in Crisis

What I see . . .	What I do . . .
<p><b>Level I</b> – Not disruptive, but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major changes in academic work, attendance, or appearance</li> <li>• Change in style of interaction</li> <li>• Depressed or anxious mood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk quietly to the student</li> <li>• Assess depth of problem</li> <li>• Provide support</li> <li>• Consult as needed</li> <li>• Refer to appropriate resource</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level II</b> – New or consistent behavior(s) that is/are disruptive to others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant emotional distress</li> <li>• Repeated requests for special consideration</li> <li>• Unusual or exaggerated emotional response(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly with the student</li> <li>• Assess depth of problem</li> <li>• Consult as appropriate</li> <li>• Walk student to counseling center</li> <li>• Request release to speak with the counselor</li> <li>• Document the interaction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level III</b> – Highly disruptive behavior, i.e., hostile, aggressive, violent, volatile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to communicate clearly</li> <li>• Overtly suicidal thoughts and threats; homicidal threats</li> <li>• Other threats toward you and/or the University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If possible, speak directly to the student</li> <li>• Meet in a quiet, public area</li> <li>• Consult with colleagues and/or the police</li> <li>• Refer as appropriate</li> <li>• Walk to the counseling center.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NOTE: IF YOU ARE AFRAID, CALL THE POLICE. Do not consult, do not waste time, and do not try to “fix” things. CALL THE POLICE!</b></p>
<b>Referrals</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Know your referral resources</li> <li>→ Be direct and express your concerns for the student</li> <li>→ Anticipate concerns and fears about counseling and be ready to address them</li> <li>→ Instill hope and a positive expectation</li> <li>→ Offer support</li> <li>→ Accept “no,” except in cases of emergency</li> <li>→ Follow up with the student</li> </ul>	