



SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT

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MOTOROLA
SOLUTIONS

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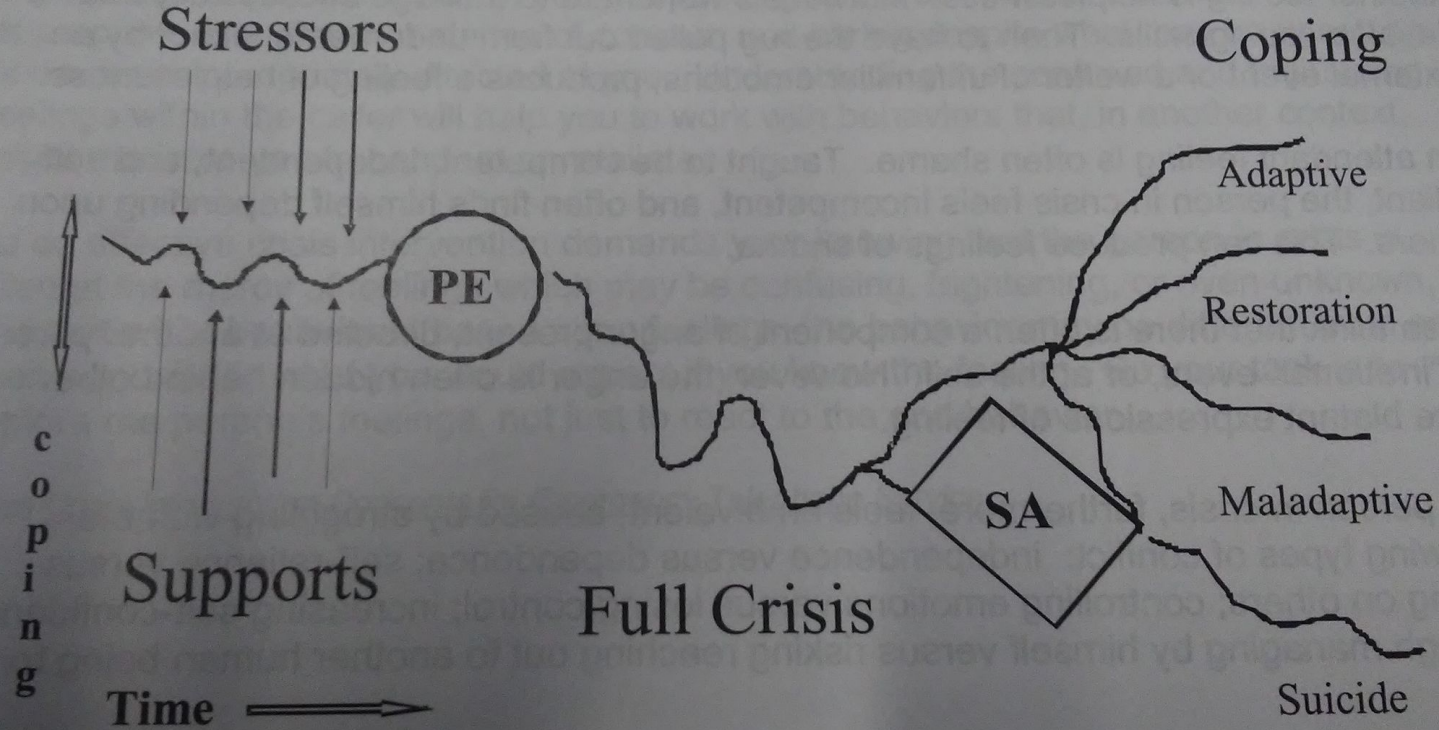


**The Effectiveness of Active Listening
in a Crisis: Why It Works**
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What Makes a Crisis?

- No metric to determine what type of life event is “big” enough to become a crisis
- A precipitating event brings on a crisis
 - Not about “what” happened, it’s about “when” it happened
- We all have stressors every day in our lives, good and bad
 - When we are functioning adaptively, we experience a stressor, our brain identifies an emotion caused by it, and then we consciously select a coping mechanism
 - When building towards a crisis we stop applying our coping mechanisms
 - As we begin to be more overwhelmed our brain gets overloaded and we do not identify the emotions being caused
- The next stressor that occurs when which causes our stress to eclipse our coping brings about a “crisis” state.
- “Crisis state” means we are now functioning from our sympathetic nervous system, aka fight or flight mode.
 - This is a time limited state. One will come out of a crisis state in 1-3 days. We want to exit the crisis state coping adaptively, otherwise we will cope maladaptively

Development & Resolution of a Crisis



How can stress bring on a crisis?

- Constant stress can cause our anterior cingulate cortex to atrophy
 - This is the part of the brain which filters our reality
 - Normally our “crisis state” (sympathetic nervous system/fight or flight mode) is activated because our sensory information indicates an immediate threat to our life
 - Constant stress can atrophy this part of the brain, thus we can enter a crisis state even though there is not an actual threat to our physical presence
 - Volume of anterior cingulate cortex will shrink and electrical activity diminish when stress hormones cross the blood/brain barrier
 - When this diminish in functioning occurs individuals will stop making decisions based upon sensory information and make them based upon learned information and past experiences: can perceive a threat when there isn’t one
- Relaxation/coping can un-do this atrophy
- This is why coping/relaxation through an emotion is the goal of crisis intervention/de-escalation
- We need them to slow down and breathe to oxygenate the brain
- We need them to relax/cope through the emotion for the day/night in order to return to neocortical

Sympathetic Nervous System vs. Parasympathetic Nervous System

- The SNS regulates the body's "flight or fight" response
- This is countered by the PNS which is responsible for sleep, digestion, and other activities when the body is at rest
- When one system is active the other is not
- When the parasympathetic nervous system is active we are happy, comfortable, and satisfied
- When we perceive a threat our sympathetic nervous system is activated and we enter a "fight or flight" mode

SNS Dominance

- Humans have evolved to where we can be in a prolonged state of SNS dominance
- By design the SNS is meant to be used only in spurts: when there is an actual threat to shut down other operations of the brain to put all functioning on fight or flight response
- Because of our capacity for learning we can now operate under a feeling of chronic perceived threat
- Causes a focus solely on perceived threat which is present outside of mind/body. Focus on external rather than internal regulation
- De-escalation is utilized to de-activate the sympathetic nervous system and activate the parasympathetic nervous system

Once we reactivate the parasympathetic nervous system

- Will again have access language skills, judgement skills, and access to all of their learning (not just concentration on the “perceived threat”) and will have a return to neocortical functioning
- This is why we can’t problem solve until after relaxation has occurred and the caller has had time to relax
 - Individuals cannot apply problem solving when they do not have their parasympathetic nervous system activated
 - Problem solving will inevitably also have a caller feeling unheard
- This is why cannot simply “calm down”.
- Active listening is a natural de-escalator which will have those in crisis slow down, feel heard, convey empathy, and reactivate the brain

Things to Avoid

- Avoid asking someone to “calm down”
 - This can be too big of an ask and can escalate someone rather than de-escalate
 - Instead: give them space. Use their name, let them know you’re there. Ask them to breathe with you.
 - Try a grounding technique - ask them to name 3 things that are near them
- When possible refer to caller by first name, rather than “sir” or “ma’am”
 - This forms a better interpersonal and trusting connection
- Do not ask “why” someone is feeling that way today
 - Ask what has been going on, to walk them through their day, how long they’ve been feeling this way, etc.
 - We don’t want someone to have to justify their feelings
 - Callers are escalated and can easily misinterpret your words as judgment which will put them on defense
 - Acknowledging how a caller is feeling will naturally de-escalate

Active Listening/Crisis Intervention

- Not about problem solving
- Not about “changing” the emotion
 - All emotions are good and we are supposed to feel them
 - How we behave/react to the emotion is where we find adaptive vs. maladaptive
- We are utilizing active listening to connect an emotion/feeling word to the presenting problem
- Because someone is in a crisis state their brain has been unable to identify the resulting emotions from their stressors. By utilizing active listening to connect emotion to an event we naturally de-escalate and can facilitate coping adaptively.
- After someone has de-escalated and relaxes they can then apply problem solving

Don't Take It Personally

Remember: the language section of the brain is affected. Important to remain as tolerant as possible of yelling, swearing, etc. This may be the only way they are capable of expressing themselves

Non-Violent Communication

- Observing without evaluating
 - Skill in processing with someone because you are always on their side
 - You are not drawing conclusions, you are on the path with your client as they develop their own understanding
- When we add in our own evaluations or advice we are reaching into our own experiences rather than focusing on the experience and reactions of others
 - When we combine observation with evaluation, others are likely to hear criticism and judgement and will probably resist what we are saying
- The process of NVC discourages static generalizations and instead encourages making evaluations based upon a specific observation

Helping Someone In Crisis

- ACTIVE LISTENING – This is your most powerful tool!
 - Slow down
 - Empathy
 - Nonjudgmental
 - Not the time for expressing your opinions, values, beliefs
 - Connecting someone to the emotion they are feeling
 - You cannot change the external circumstance, but you can help someone cope with the emotion caused by it
 - Connecting emotion to event helps engage prefrontal cortex and move out of subcortical limbic system
 - Helps to feel heard, and that you understand
- Active listening is especially valuable for telephonic work. We do not have our non-verbals to relay caring, it is completely up to our verbal skills so we must be even more intentional.

Empathy

- Conveying to someone that you hear that they feel “X” and that is okay, and you are there with them
- Not about how you would feel in the situation, it's about being with another where they are without judgment, evaluation, or silver lining
- “There's no 'I' in Empathy”

Active Listening Toolbox

Encouraging Statements

Paraphrasing

Summarization

Feeling Reflections

Feeling reflection formula: “paraphrase of caller statement, and it sounds like you're feeling {feeling word}”

Examples

- “I got a flat tire on the way to work and was late! My boss was so unfair and gave me a write - up, he doesn’t understand anything!”
 - “I can hear you’ve had a hard day, that you had a flat tire on your way to work and you think your boss was unfair in giving you a write up, and it sounds like you’re feeling angry”
- “I need help. I think I’m going to be late on my rent. They’ve cut back hours at my job and my child has been sick”
 - “I’m so glad that you’re talking about this. You’ve had a lot on your plate with your child being sick and bills being due, and it sounds like you’re feeling anxious.”
- “I’m so overwhelmed. My mother passed away and everything is falling apart. I know I need help from a therapist but I can’t even get out of bed”
 - “It took such strength to ask for support. I can hear that you’ve been grieving and that you’re feeling sad and exhausted.”

Use Active Listening as Engaging Statements

- We want to avoid asking too many questions as this can put someone on the defense or disrupt rapport
- Having a conversation is a natural de-escalator
- By paraphrasing what someone has said and adding a feeling word you naturally provide a space for them to reflect and dig deeper and/or tell you more of the story
- This takes a little more time on the front end but saves you time on the back end
- They will feel you are on their side, will de-escalate, and be open to hearing your referrals and/or plan for coping

Collaborate on a Plan for Coping

- As you have been speaking you have been identifying feeling words
- Once you have heard their story and they are in a more relaxed space you can collaboratively come up with a short term plan for coping with that emotion
- Not problem solving or changing the emotion: How can they relax through this emotion?
 - What has helped in the past when they have felt “x”?
 - What do they think may distract them or help them relax?
 - Suggest self care activities (walk, music, television, eating, talking to a support, getting to bed early, etc.)
 - Avoid media/social media consumption

Access Resources After Relaxation has Occurred

- Once someone has relaxed and returned to neocortical functioning they can utilize internal and external resources and problem solving
- You can give resource referrals when in a crisis once they have de-escalated
 - The resource referral may be part of your POA, but your client should exercise self-care and relaxation before engaging in problem solving, if possible
- Follow up to check on referrals are very valuable
 - In this check in you can give referrals or confirm that they still have the information and understand how to access the resource referral
 - As they were in a crisis they may have lost the information or forgotten the details of the resource. Follow up can reduce unnecessary call backs.
 - Provides an opportunity to check in, confirm your client has the referral, and relay care and empathy

VIA LINK Resources for Continuum of Care

VIA LINK

LISTENING • UNDERSTANDING • CONNECTING

24/7 Phone, Chat, and Text Lines

- 2-1-1 (I&R, Crisis, Kinship Caregivers, Disaster or text 898-211)
- **9-8-8 (available through phone and text)**
- Crisis Chat (www.Vialink.org)
- **Crisis Teen Textline (833-TXT-TEEN)**
- Louisiana Parentline (833-LA-CHILD or text 225-424-1533)
- Keeping Calm (866-310-7977)

Help is 3 Numbers Away

988 Provides Crisis Support for:

- Thoughts of Suicide
- Mental Health Crisis
- Substance Use Crisis
- Emotional Distress

Call For
Emergencies

911

911 Provides First Responder Dispatch for:

- Medical Emergency
- Fire
- Reporting a Crime
- Disaster Response
- Life Threatening Situation

Warm
Handoff

Call For
Suicide Intervention &
Crisis Support

988

Warm
Handoff

Call For
Essential Services

211

Whole
Person
Care

Warm
Handoff

211 Maintains a Comprehensive Community Resources Database and Provides Information & Referrals for:

- Food
- Housing & Shelter
- Utility Assistance
- Healthcare Services
- Government Services
- Transportation
- Legal Services
- Counseling & Support Groups
- Disaster aftercare
- & Everything Else

Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana (PCAL)

- VIA LINK houses the Louisiana affiliate for Prevent Child Abuse America
- PCAL has a mission of providing 24/7 emotional support for families, connection to parenting resources, advocacy for children and families, and education for those who care for Louisiana's children.
- VIA LINK's PCAL Program coordinates with community partners to provide outreach and advocacy for Louisiana's families
- VIA LINK's PCAL Program provides educational trainings for families and for help-givers who work with families centered on preventing child abuse and family wellness
- Louisiana Parentline is a phone and textline aimed at supporting families and preventing child abuse

Education and Training

- Suicide Education & Response
 - 1, 2, 3, and 4 hour options
- Crisis Intervention/De-escalation
 - 1 and 2 hour options
- Working with Trauma
 - 1.5 hours
- Recognizing and Responding to Grief
 - 1 and 2 hour options
- Darkness 2 Light's Stewards of Children Training
 - 2 hours
- ACEs Training
- From Mandated Reporting to Mandated Supporting
 - 1.5 hours
- Psychological First Aid for Schools
- TARGET YOUTH

Traumatic Loss Services

- VIA LINK offers SOS - Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group: a free, weekly support group, available statewide, for adult survivors of suicide loss. SOS Group meets every Thursday on zoom from 6:30 - 8 p.m. For information or to join email sos@vialink.org
- VIA LINK is available for postvention services in the event of a traumatic death. For information email screspo@vialink.org

Real Talk

- Virtual support group for teens (ages 12-17) living with suicide ideation
- Free to join and meets every Tuesday from 6pm - 7:30 pm
- For information or to join email: realtalk@vialink.org

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Reach out to me: screspo@vialink.org