

Crises Response

When can we experience a crisis?

- When there is a new situation which we have not encountered before
- When we experience a situation in which we don't have the resources or coping strategies from our past
- When we encounter circumstances that exceed our present resources or coping strategies

What are the signs of a crisis?

a) Emotions

- different emotions, from helplessness, feeling anxiety and panicky
- feeling overwhelmed

b) Thinking

- a flood of different thoughts
- thinking in absolute terms
- lack hope or a perspective from which they could look at the situation
- thoughts, such as "What will I do?", "I can't deal with this situation", etc.

c) Behaviour

- agitated, jumpy, disorganized
- trigger situations they dealt with in the past/completely new situation

d) Physical

- appearing dishevelled (hygiene/dress) or scattered
- crying more often
- feeling nauseous, headaches
- changes in eating or sleeping

What can be the outcomes from a crisis?

a) Positive outcomes

- becoming less defensive
- more open to making changes
- seeking help
- not avoiding problems

b) Negative outcomes

- low mood, depression, suicidal thoughts/attempts

What are the components of a crisis?

- a) External situation
 - event/obstacle
- b) Internal State
 - emotions (fear, overwhelmed)
 - negative self-talk
- c) Physical State
 - increased heart rate
 - uncontrollable shaking
 - feeling of “I cannot move”
- d) Self-Efficacy
 - decreased agency
 - decreased coping

What is your role as a mentor?

- As a mentor, you cannot control the **external situation!**
- You can focus on the other three components:
 - Try to help calm the mentee’s internal state.
 - Talk in a slow, soothing voice.
 - Repeat short, simple sentences, “It is going to be okay.”
 - You can help to reduce their physical response – through breathing exercises, relaxation skills, meditation, etc.).
 - Try to distract them not to focus on their physical response (this is individual someone wants to talk about their interest, for some, it works when they focus only on a point, etc.).
 - You can try to remind them of their past successes and accomplishments
 - Encourage and support them in order to increase their sense of agency and ability to cope.
 - You can suggest a few simple steps to do in such a situation.

Remember to ask them what they think would help them in such a situation.

When you are not sure what to do, try to suggest talking to someone from the BISLA administration.

Know and remember your own limits:

- your personal values
- personal state of being – when we are stressed, for example, our limits will be lower
- extent of the crisis
- your health (mental/emotional)

What to do after a crisis?

- Don't forget that the mentee is not the only one who is dealing with the crisis. You are not expected to just carry on with your life. It is important that you take time to decompress. If you need, talk to the mentoring coordinators or the mentors' supervisor to debrief after such a situation.
- Remember you are not there to act as a mental health counsellor, and neither are you supposed to solve the problems of a mentee. You are there to support them.
- **Simply give them your attention, show empathy. Those are sometimes the most valuable ways how to help.**