What is a Crisis?

- A time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger
- A disruption or breakdown in a person’s or family’s normal pattern of functioning, or a period of psychological disequilibrium. A crisis cannot be resolved by a person’s usual problem-solving resources/skills. May be different than a problem or an emergency
  - **Problem:** May create stress and be difficult to solve, but generally the individual or family is able to handle the situation using their customary problem-solving resources/skills.
  - **Emergency:** A sudden, pressing situation, such as when a life may be in danger from a suicide or homicide attempt, or family violence. It requires **immediate** attention. A crisis, on the other hand, can handle a 24-72 hour waiting period without placing the individual or family in jeopardy.
Three Elements to the Creation of a Crisis

1. The occurrence of a hazardous or extremely stressful experience.
2. The survivor's perception that the experience will lead to major upset and/or disruption.
3. The survivor's coping skills are inadequate to cope with the current situation.

- Important to remember-- Each crisis situation is unique and will require a flexible approach to the client and situation.
Crisis intervention is an important element of the healing process for victims. Crisis intervention should not be assigned to one specific agency or organization, but should be an important element of each agency or organization that deals with victims of crime. This includes victim advocacy organizations (such as hospitals or schools), social services agencies, law enforcement, and corrections. Many law enforcement agencies have developed crisis intervention teams staffed by professional social workers to respond to crisis they face as a result of emergency calls. To be effective, crisis intervention must be provided in an orderly, structured, humanistic manner and must focus on the individuality of the victim and his or her needs.
What is Crisis Intervention?

Crisis intervention for victims of crime may vary depending on the needs of the victim and the type of victimization. However, there are some critical elements to crisis intervention services that are necessary for all victims:

- Establish rapport (Psychological first aid)
- Survivor needs assessment and empathetic support
- Recovery intervention
The Three Phases of Crisis Intervention

Phase 1
Establish Rapport

Immediate crisis intervention or "psychological first aid" involves establishing a rapport with the victim, gathering information for short-term assessment and service delivery, and averting a potential state of crisis. Many victims may be resistant to crisis intervention due to fear or anxiety. Resistance is one form of the victim's response to a crisis situation. The immediacy of the response is critical to ensure the safety of the victim and his or her family. Time may be extremely important because of impending danger to the victim or the family. Victims should not wait hours or days to see a crisis intervention counselor to assist in their time of need.

Immediate crisis intervention also includes caring for the medical, physical, mental health and personal needs of the victim, and providing information to the victim about local resources or services. Referrals should be made to other agencies for other services, such as shelter facilities, home security or for crime victim compensation.
In order to provide emotional support to the victim, there must be an assessment of needs to determine the services and resources required by the victim. The purpose of this phase is to determine how the crisis affects the victim's life so that a plan for recovery can be developed, allowing the victim to begin moving towards the future.
Helping the victim re-stabilize their lives and become healthy again. It also involves helping the victim prevent further victimization from the criminal justice system or other agencies the victim may come into contact with in the aftermath of victimization. This is the initial period of recovery for the victim, and may require considerable time, effort and resources before the victim resolves long-term issues associated with the victimization.
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Victim service providers also focus on reducing risk factors for victims, maximizing their social support systems, maximizing and improving their coping skills, and helping victims obtain greater self-esteem and self worth. This includes working with other agencies to reduce added trauma imposed on victims who go through the complex and often frustrating criminal justice system.
To Provide Crisis Intervention

- Stay Calm / Speak Calmly
- Build rapport with person
- Gather pertinent information without interrogating
- Attend to the most immediate needs first
- Provide information in bits to allow for processing
- Don’t make promises or over-commit yourself to the person in crisis
- Ask for help if you need to
Crisis Intervention Tips

- Allow the client to tell her story, without interruption, disbelief, or immediate pressure.
- Help the client identify her feelings during and after the story telling.
- Be aware of your own attitudes, experiences and reactions to violence.
- Be aware of the differences between women and the services available in their communities.
- Know your own limits of time and energy. Be honest about the services you can provide.
Crisis Intervention Tips (continued)

- Consider the cultural values and beliefs of women which directly affect their behavior.
- Be aware of your own cultural biases, beliefs, and prejudices.
- Help the client identify her strengths as well as her weaknesses.
- Encourage the client to accept responsibility for choices she makes after the assault.
- Help the client establish a positive sense of assertive behavior.
Crisis Resolution

- Crisis resolution occurs when the individual is able to restore their equilibrium and cognitively master the situation through the development of new coping skills.
Please Remember

- You are not everyone’s best friend. You and the survivor may experience very different reactions to the same situation and have very different coping styles.

- You are not the all-loving parent. You have your limits, and not all survivors will be easy for you to tolerate and unconditionally accept.

- You are not the only solution to the survivor's problems or the source for all referrals.

- You are not infallible. You will make mistakes.

- It is not your decision what the survivor must do. They are the expert on their life.