



Health Education Fact Sheet

From Nurses for You

*Nursing Best
Practice Guideline*

Understanding Crisis

Everyone at some point in his or her life will experience crisis

What is a crisis?

A crisis is an emotional upset that is caused by an unexpected event such as the death of a loved one, a divorce, the loss of a job, an illness or a family conflict. A crisis may leave you feeling helpless and unable to cope.

Is crisis different than stress?

- Stress and crisis are not the same thing. A crisis event always creates stress, but stress does not always create a crisis.
- Each person views crisis in his or her own unique way.

How do you know if you are in crisis?

Crisis can take the form of many emotions that can make you feel overwhelmed and confused. You could be in crisis if you feel one or more of the following:

- Troubled
- Guilty, restless and anxious
- Fearful and alone
- Life is out of control
- Life is not real – more like a bad dream
- You have difficulty doing your usual activities
- Life is no longer worth living
- Intense anger
- You are not seeing family and friends as often as you would like
- Work or school is not going well
- You are relying more and more on alcohol or drugs to get you through the day
- Your sleeping and eating patterns have changed

If you think that you might be in crisis, seek professional help as soon as possible:

- A crisis does not last forever. It can be resolved if recognized early.
- It can also result in personal growth and a better life if it is managed in a timely and effective manner.

Remember – you are not alone. Talk to your nurse, doctor, or other healthcare providers.

These professionals are in a position to give you advice on how to get your life back in control.

Your healthcare professional will work with you to develop a plan that may include:

- Ways to manage and feel more in control of your life.
- Referrals to other members of the healthcare team, such as a medical doctor or psychiatrist for a check-up and medication, a lawyer for legal advice, and a psychologist or social worker for counselling.
- Recommending books and other resources that can help explain more about what you are going through.
- Providing you with information about shelters, support groups or other community agencies.

After discussing your concerns with your healthcare provider, you might want to write down some of the suggestions to help you deal with your crisis situation: 



This information fact sheet is developed as a supplement to the RNAO Nursing Best Practice Guidelines on *Crisis Intervention*. The intent is to increase your knowledge and involvement in making decisions about your health. This and other nursing best practice guidelines are available for public viewing and free download at www.rnao.org/bestpractices.



Registered Nurses Association of Ontario
Nursing Best Practice Guidelines Project
111 Richmond St. West, Suite 1208
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2G4
Website: www.rnao.org

*This project is funded by the
Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care*