

Many definitions of crisis social work essay



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I agree that not everyone is suitable to do crisis intervention work as there are many factors that need to be considered when doing crisis work. The main factor that is essential for any crisis intervention work is the characteristics and personality of the crisis worker. James & Gilliland (2001, p. 17) claim that effective crisis workers share a number characteristics and such workers demonstrate competency in their professional skills. Before we analyze the crisis worker, we need to understand crisis, crisis intervention and the difference between other therapies and crisis intervention because of the need to understand how the role of the intervener differs from other therapies and what are the characteristics that is needed specifically for the crisis intervention. There are many definitions of crisis but a summarized definition would be that " crisis is a perception or experiencing of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person's current resources and coping mechanisms," (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 3). A similar definition of crisis is by Roberts (2000) who views crisis as " a period of psychological disequilibrium, experienced as a result of a hazardous event or situation that constitutes a significant problem that cannot be remedied by using familiar coping strategies" (p. 7). There are many types of crisis and crisis is not simple but is complex and difficult to understand. It is essential that the individual is able to get relief from the crisis because the crisis causes disruption and breakdown to an individual's ongoing pattern of everyday functioning. If the crisis is not handled, the situation would tend to immobilize them and they will be unable to control their lives. Apart from that, a crisis can cause individuals to have affective, behavioural and cognitive malfunctioning. Crisis intervention is an internal helping response and is defined as " methods used to offer short term immediate help to

individuals who have experienced an event that produces mental, physical, emotional and behavioural distress," (Mitchell, n. d. para. 1). The ultimate goal of crisis intervention is reducing the dangers of the crisis and allow it to be resolved positively allowing the individual to go on and thrive in life (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005, p. 25). This intervention will focus on resolving the immediate problem to prevent further deterioration and to prevent a negative outcome. An article by Center for School Mental Health Assistance (2002) states that, " crisis intervention will restore a sense of equilibrium for the individual in crisis and give them the ability to creatively problem-solve and feel efficacious." Crisis intervention differs from other therapies and traditional counselling because it " focuses on short term strategies to prevent damage during and immediately after the experience of trauma," (Mitchell, n. d. para. 5). This intervention is oriented in the present and focuses on the immediate problem which disrupts people from controlling their life. The intervener's role is to offer immediate assistance to the individual who is struggling with a complex situation and assist them to go on and achieve a meaningful resolution (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005, p. 25). In comparison to crisis intervention, other therapies deal with the totality of the individual's personality and life issues and tend to be long term as they aim to improve the client's mental health and personal well-being with an attempt to remediate more or less ongoing emotional problems. This only escalates to a crisis when there are threats to fulfilment, safety or meaningful existence (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 8-9) and this is where the crisis worker takes over. To be a crisis worker, the helper has to have certain qualities to be able to intervene during the crisis and life experiences of the intervener are an important aspect to handle a crisis.

These life experiences serve as a resource for emotional maturity that combined with training, enables workers to be stable, consistent and well integrated not only within the crisis situation but also in their daily lives (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 13). When a worker has previous experience of going through a crisis and comes across another individual who is in the similar crisis, they will be able to use their background as a resource to deal with the crisis. For example a crisis worker has previously made suicide attempts and has dealt with it, now has a client who is on the verge of attempting suicide. The crisis worker will be able to help the client overcome the issue because of the first hand experience of the crisis. James & Gilliland (2001) suggest that people who usually do crisis intervention are products of their own crisis environment and they have chosen to work with people experiencing the same kind of crisis they themselves have suffered, and they use their experiential background when working with people in crisis (p. 13). Apart from this, life experiences means the helper has emotionally matured and it can enhance the depth and sensitivity with which the clients are treated. One other characteristic that is essential for a crisis helper is remaining poised because " the nature of crisis intervention is that the worker is often confronted with shocking and threatening materials from clients who are completely out of control," (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 14). When a helper remains poised in a situation where the client is out of control, there are chances that the stress level of the client will not be escalated. As the helper models this trait to the client, soon a stable atmosphere and a state of composure can be achieved. Eventually the situation will be brought into control and any immediate danger will be diffused. This trait of calming the victim and the situation has to be deeply

abided within the helper and cannot be taught. Aguilera & Messick (1982) stated that creativity and flexibility are major assets to those confronted with perplexing and seeming unsolvable problems (p. 24). All crisis helpers are equipped with many skills and these skills have to be used in specific and creative ways personalized to the client's needs and crisis. Sometimes to solve the crisis, untraditional and unconventional approaches need to be used. Helpers also cannot approach a crisis with a fixed and rigid formula but instead should have " a tentative plan for how to address it, combined with a readiness to let go of that approach if it does not work," (Miller, 2012, p. 6). Creating solutions is time sensitive and by being flexible to try and use different approaches, the helper will be more effective to lead the client through a comfortable intervention. Energy and resiliency are required for crisis intervention as crisis situations can be very demanding. Being energized is largely dependent on the worker themselves to take care of their own physical and psychological needs so that their energy level remains high (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 15). Resilience on the other hand is also essential because it is natural for helpers to face failure no matter how capable or committed they were and when times of failure arise, helpers need be able to move forward and not face a meltdown. As mentioned previously, crisis intervention compared to other therapies is time critical and helpers must have quick mental reflexes to " deal with the constantly emerging and changing issues that occur in the crisis," (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 15). Helpers need to be able to think quickly on their feet and make quick evaluations and decisions as there is no time to reflect and slowly mull over the crisis. There is also a need for the helper to be comfortable in making decisions on their own because most of the time, they do not have

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another person supervising them. Finally, one of the other traits a crisis helper should possess is the potential and desire to grow and change. Doing crisis intervention is not a static work as there is constant and rapid change in this field. The helper needs to change after each contact with a client because "successful resolution of the crisis results in two products, the first is helping the client overcome the crisis and second, effecting positive change in the helper as a result of the encounter," (James & Gilliland, 2001, p. 15). In conclusion, I agree that not everyone is suitable to do crisis intervention because a crisis requires helpers who share a number of characteristics to demonstrate competency in their professional skills. Helpers ought to maintain poise when confronting a situation, to be creative and flexible in their approach to deal with the situation, to be able to have the energy and resilience, to be able to have quick mental reflexes and also have the potential to grow from each encounter of crisis. All of these characteristics are of enormous value to the helper and to the client and without them it is unlikely to be able to assist the client to reduce the dangers of the crisis and facilitate a positive resolution.(1475 words)