



Crisis Intervention Tips for Friends and Family

Keep these tips in mind when talking to someone who has experienced a crisis or trauma.

- **Establish safety.** Make sure the person is safe. Ask if he/she feels safe.
- **Reach out.** Calling, getting together, sending a card, etc. may alleviate feelings of isolation.
- **Allow the person to talk.** Don't use the crisis as a chance to relate your own experiences.
- **Listen patiently and non-judgmentally.** Listen more than you speak and try not to interrupt.
- **Provide options, not advice.** Don't tell the person what to do. Let him/her decide. Encourage the person to get help from an advocate, counselor, or other professional.
- **Support and validate.** Any feelings brought on by a traumatic situation are legitimate and common reactions. No feelings are wrong or unacceptable.
- **Regulate your voice.** A relaxed tone of voice that is not too light or intense will assist in comforting the person.
- **Show acceptance.** Express an open, non-judgmental attitude. Affirm that the person's concerns and feelings are legitimate and important. Remember, his/her perception is reality.
- **Show empathy.** Avoid over-reactions and patronizing behaviors. Don't minimize anything that is important to the person. Express that you're sorry for what happened to him/her.
- **Use open-ended questions.** Avoid questions that only require a yes or no answer. Open-ended questions allow the victim to add details and keep the conversation flowing.
- **Never ask "why" questions.** "Why" questions can sound blaming and often put people on the defensive. Crime, violence, and abuse are never the survivor's fault. The person may blame him/herself already, and it is important that we don't add to these feelings.
- **Use reflective listening.** Reflect, rephrase, and summarize what you think the person said to let them know you are listening and comprehending. Ask for clarification if you're unsure of something.
- **Be comfortable with silence.** The person needs time to process information. If the silence becomes too lengthy, use the opportunity to summarize or ask for clarification.
- **Don't tell the person to get over it.** Different people cope differently and take different periods of time to adjust to their "new normal" in the aftermath of trauma. They cannot simply "get over" what happened. The healing process may take longer than you expect.
- **Understand that traumatic experiences can be life changing.** What happened will always be a part of the person's history.

Center for Prevention & Advocacy

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