

Coping with a Crisis

What is a crisis? A crisis is a condition of instability or danger that may occur suddenly and great intensity. Crises can be physical, situational, circumstantial, or emotional. It generates many feelings, thoughts, symptoms, and responses in an individual.

Have I experienced a crisis? This is not an unusual question, since people can minimize the significance of events or situations. You may have experienced several crises in your life. You may even be working through a crisis now.

What are some examples of crisis? Crisis comes in many forms. Here are a few examples:

- Hearing about and/or witnessing the serious injury of a family member(s), friends(s), coworker(s), or other meaningful people in your life;
- Hearing about the sudden death of a meaningful person/people in your life;
- Witnessing the unexpected death of another;
- Experiencing an event in which you feel threatened or possibly in harm's way;
- Being the victim of crime and/or violent act—as well as hearing about or witnessing this event.

What should I be feeling, thinking, or doing? Because there is no one else who is just like you, your response to a crisis is unique. Indeed, you may experience a **range** of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Here are just a few common responses to crisis:

Feelings

Shock/Numbness	Sadness/Depression
Anxiety	Grief (loss)
Anger/Rage	Confusion
Fear/Terror	Distress

Thoughts

Recurrent, upsetting thoughts about the incident
Nightmares
Second-guessing (“what if...”) thoughts
Decreased concentration/decreased ability to focus
Increased or Excessive worry
Constant questioning

Physical Symptoms

Gastrointestinal distress	Nervous Stomach
Headache	Rapid heartbeat
Numbness	Vomiting
Body Aches	Fatigue

Behaviors

Difficulty functioning at school, home and/or work
Excessive edginess/jumpiness
Increased Irritability
Sleep Disturbance (trouble falling asleep, waking up, or falling back to sleep)
Appetite Disturbance
Isolation or Avoidance of people, places, and activities that recall the event
Preoccupation with talking and/or listening to others discuss the crisis
(e.g., media coverage, friends at school, or family)

How do I know if I'm reacting normally to a crisis? Again, your responses to a crisis are your own. In fact, you will most likely experience many feelings and thoughts as time passes. The intensity of your response to crisis is influenced by your current life situation, your personal history, and by the specific details of the crisis itself. If you consider your response to be a problem, you may want to seek professional help.