



Dartmouth College
Faculty & Employee Assistance Program
603-646-1165

HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

Dedicated to providing quality confidential assistance to employees and or their families who may be experiencing difficulties that impact their lives

WINTER 2009

For Your Information

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WORK TO HOME

Prearrange with family members to allow yourself a "rejuvenation time" upon arriving home. Use this brief interlude to organize your thoughts, look through the mail, exercise, go for a walk, change your clothes, take a shower or hot bath, or partake in a relaxing tea time ritual.



COUPLE CARE

Treat your partner the way you want to be treated. Be respectful if you want to be respected. This approach helps establish the fact that both partners have responsibility in the relationship.



DO YOU KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

Many people recognize excessive sadness as a sign of depression but did you know that symptoms of depression often include headaches, back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, anxiety, sleep problems, shortness of breath, and many other conditions? If you have persistent symptoms that resist treatment, the underlying problem might be depression. Call your EAP or doctor and ask to be examined for depression.

SELF HELP

Growing Through A Personal Crisis

By Denise Bonner, Ph.D.



For me, the crisis began with a phone call, "Your mother has lung cancer." A crisis is like a bomb that explodes in your life and shatters it. It is a state of tremendous upheaval, hurt and despair, caused by a specific experience, whether it be the death of a loved one, getting fired from a job, being victimized, the loss of a special relationship, or finding out you or someone you love has a serious illness.

To be alive and to be human is to know crisis; no one is immune. Somewhere, sometime, in some way you will face a crisis or have

Somehow, you have faced a crisis. If so, you know how it feels and what it can do to you.

When a crisis occurs, you may discover that your normal coping skills no longer work. If you could handle the upset by using your normal problem-solving skills you would not be experiencing a crisis – a very rough time, but not a crisis.

In my profession as a psychotherapist, I help people deal with and effectively move through crisis periods. I know no one is immune to crisis, including myself. And yet, as bad as it is, as terrible as it makes you feel, a crisis can be survived. What is more, a time of crisis can be turned into a time of growth. Through crisis the possibility exists for creating something new and better and you can emerge from crisis a stronger, wiser and more capable person.

You may notice that people who have grown through a crisis often talk about how they have been transformed in some way by the traumatic experience. For example, you may know someone who has suffered a physical crisis where there has been a loss of physical functioning. This person may talk about the fact that they discovered new skills and resources they had never known before. They may talk about growing closer to others or learning to express their caring or needs more openly.

Why do some people emerge transformed by crisis, and show great benefit from the experience, while others remain stifled, bitter, angry, closed or hurting?

Learning how to grow through crisis

Consider the following suggestions to help you grow through a crisis:

- 1. Take care of yourself.** Physical strain always accompanies the psychological strain of a crisis. Tiredness, sleep issues, disturbed eating patterns, heart palpitations, headaches, neck or back pain, muscular tension or pain, nausea or stomach ache – many or all of these can accompany a crisis. Pay attention to any symptoms you may be experiencing and practice known health practices to help lessen their impact on your health and well being, such as: getting adequate sleep, eating a nutritious diet, limiting your intake of caffeine and alcohol, avoiding use of tobacco or drug use, exercising for at least 30 minutes most days, and practicing some form of relaxation on most days.

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GROWING THROUGH CRISIS...

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2. Express painful emotions. The most common aspect of a crisis that I frequently hear expressed is that the whole experience feels terrible. Many powerful emotions are felt in a crisis – sorrow, anger, anxiety, fear, confusion, helplessness. If not expressed, these emotions will be bottled up in some way and prolong or increase your distress.

People who survive and grow through a crisis come to terms with these powerful emotions. In the early stages of a crisis, it is important to identify the feelings and express them in healthy ways. Keeping a journal, talking to a close friend, a spouse, your physician, a psychotherapist, or clergy person are all important resources that can be used to express your feelings.

3. Develop a new mental perspective.

When I listen to people in crisis the most common comment I hear is, "I never expected this to happen to me." This feeling is very normal, but suggests that there is a need to gain a mental grasp of the crisis, to analyze all of the components that are contributing to the crisis. Growing through a crisis means adapting mentally and developing new thoughts, beliefs and understandings regarding how you interpret the crisis and how you think about it. To gain a healthier mental perspective, follow these steps:

- Learn everything you can about the crisis. The more you know it, the better you'll be able to deal with it. Face the painful facts.
- Analyze how the crisis has shattered your expectations, dreams or goals. Ask yourself: "What's the worse thing that can happen as a result of this crisis? Who or what is in control of this crisis now?" Identify where the repair work is needed.
- Develop a new mental map. The new map contains revised dreams and goals. Begin by identifying your opportunities.

If you are in the midst of a crisis, remind yourself that nothing is permanent and that all things will one day come to an end, including bad episodes. Reach out to family, friends, support groups or clergy for help and support, or seek professional help. The road through crisis is never easy. There will be setbacks and discouragement. Within you are reservoirs of courage, strength and love. Follow the suggestions above and with time you will survive and learn how to grow through crisis. You will emerge ready to resume living, loving, working and ready to move your life forward.

Suicide Prevention

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 75 percent of those who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.

What are the warning signs of suicide?

Warning signs of suicide may include:

- ◆ Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking or writing about wanting to do so
- ◆ Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- ◆ Giving away prized possessions
- ◆ Feeling hopeless, seeing no reason for living
- ◆ Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger
- ◆ Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- ◆ Feeling trapped or desperate – like there's no way out
- ◆ Increasing alcohol or drug use
- ◆ Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- ◆ Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- ◆ Experiencing dramatic mood changes



*Source: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Note: The warning signs above are some typical behaviors which may be cause for concern. This list is not intended to be all inclusive and you should never attempt to diagnose a behavioral health issue.

What to do if you think a friend or loved one is suicidal

Professional help should be sought immediately if a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts. Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. In an acute crisis, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for a referral to the closest possible crisis center in your area. In addition, a caring and professional EAP counselor can provide you with information and support regarding how to most effectively help the person you're concerned about, or provide you with other information about suicide prevention or mental health services. All EAP services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: If you are concerned about an individual who is not covered by your EAP benefit, you can refer him/her to the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis.



Faculty & Employee Assistance Program Services

Provided by Dartmouth College for you and your family members

The Faculty Employee Assistance Program (F/EAP) is a free, confidential, professional counseling service for members of the Dartmouth College faculty and staff and their families. The FEAP may be used to address work-related or personal conflicts, including relationship or family problems, substance abuse, stress, and legal or financial concerns. We also provide consultation services for supervisors and departments, as well as maintain a resource directory.

For FREE confidential counseling and consultation call: 603-646-1165
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Web: www.dartmouth.edu/~eap