

WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS



S.T.O.P.

When you are hit by a crisis, no one is ever prepared, and for the most part, it is unexpected. Given this event, we may have a crisis reaction. This is normal even though it may not seem so. Here's what you can do to cope and overcome the distress: S.T.O.P.

Slow your breathing

- Take a few deep breaths, and mindfully observe the breath flowing in and flowing out. This will help to anchor you in the present.

Take note

- Take note of your experience in this moment. Notice what you are thinking. Notice what you are feeling. Notice what you are doing. Notice how your thoughts and feelings are swirling around, and can easily carry you away if you allow them.

Open up

- Open up around your feelings. Breathe into them and make room for them. Open up to your thoughts too: take a step back and give them some room to move, without holding onto them or trying to push them away. See them for what they are and give them space, rather than fusing with them.

Pursue your values

- Once you've done the above three steps, you will be in a mental state of mindfulness. The next step is to respond to the crisis by pursuing a valued course of action. Connect with your values: ask yourself, 'What do I want to be about, in the face of this crisis? What do I want to stand for? How would I like to act, so that I can look back years from now and feel proud of my response?'

Things to Consider

1) Do you need, or would you benefit from help/assistance/support/advice? If so, what friends or relatives can you contact? What professionals could you arrange to see? (If necessary, what helpline numbers could you call?)

2) Have you experienced anything similar before? If so, how did you respond that was useful and helpful in the long term? Is there anything you learned from that experience that you can usefully apply now?

3) Is there anything you can do to improve the situation in any way? Are there any TINY steps you could take immediately that could be helpful? What are the smallest, simplest, easiest, tiny steps you could take:

a) in the next few minutes

b) in the next few hours

c) in the next few days

Note: the first step might simply be to spend a few minutes practicing some mindful breathing – or to take out a pen and paper and write an action plan.

4) If there is nothing you can do to improve the situation, then are you willing to practice acceptance, using expansion and defusion skills, while engaging fully in the present moment? And given that the situation is unchangeable, how can you spend your time and energy constructively, rather than worrying or blaming or dwelling? Again, reconnect with your values: what do you want to be about in response to this situation? What are some tiny values-driven steps you can take?

5) You don't get to choose the deck of cards you are dealt in life; you only get to choose how you play with them. So a useful question to ask is: 'Given this is the hand I've been dealt, what's the best way to play with it? What personal strengths can I develop or strengthen as I go through this ordeal? How can I learn and grow from this experience?' Note: any painful experience is an opportunity to develop your mindfulness skills.

6) Be compassionate to yourself. Ask yourself, 'If someone I loved was going through this experience, feeling what I am feeling – if I wanted to be kind and caring towards them, how would I treat them? How would I behave towards them? What might I say or do?' Then try treating yourself the same way.

There are many reactions to a crisis, which can be grouped into four main categories:

COGNITIVE

- ☐ Confusion in thinking
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions
- ☐ Loss of attention span
 - ☐ Lowered concentration
- ☐ Problems with abstract thinking
 - ☐ Calculation problems
 - ☐ Memory dysfunction
- ☐ Lowering of all higher cognitive functions

PHYSICAL

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Excessive sweating
 - ☐ Chills
- ☐ Dizzy spells
- ☐ Light headedness
- ☐ Globus hystericus
 - ☐ Thirst
 - ☐ Hunger
- ☐ Increased heart rate
- ☐ Elevated blood pressure
- ☐ Rapid breathing
 - ☐ Chest pain
- ☐ Difficulty breathing

EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Emotional shock
- ☐ Emotional numbness
 - ☐ Anger
 - ☐ Grief
 - ☐ Depression
 - ☐ Feeling overwhelmed
- ☐ Heightened anxiety
 - ☐ Panic feelings
- ☐ Loss of emotional control
 - ☐ Fear

BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Changes in ordinary behavior patterns
- ☐ Changes in eating
- ☐ Decreases personal hygiene
 - ☐ Increased or decreased association with fellow workers
 - ☐ Withdrawal from others
 - ☐ Loss of interest in work
 - ☐ Prolonged silences

How to Cope with Crisis Reactions

- Periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time: keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself "crazy".
- Talk to people – talking is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; you don't need to complicate this with substance misuse.
- Reach out to people care, and spend time with others.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others. (it can be virtual!)
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel distressing emotions.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are also under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible in order to will give yourself feelings of control over your life (i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them even if you're not sure).
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

Counselling Testimonials



I had the absolute privilege of working alongside Karine in a therapeutic capacity. She is incredibly dedicated, passionate and motivated to implement change. Karine has a wealth of knowledge in leadership and group facilitation and shows empathy for her clients with a strong level of professionalism.

Carli Rothschild
Human Resource Manager



Karine is passionate and dedicated. She has a strong clinical intuition grounded in a solid theoretical understanding of human nature and grasp of therapeutic modalities. She is kind, compassionate and professional even in challenging situations.

Justine Mrkusic
Clinical Psychologist



Karine is an extremely passionate individual with exceptional group facilitating and counselling skills. She is an individual who has truly mastered the art of counselling. She has been a fantastic mentor with a wealth of knowledge, expertise, professionalism and has so much to offer. Karine's down to earth personality, her compassionate nature, kindness and genuineness highly contributes to her effectiveness in her work. Her passion and dedication is clearly evident in everything that she does. Her work was not only greatly appreciated by the people with whom she worked but also by her clients.

When I found myself back in yachting after a long and unplanned break, I knew that finding consistent support would be my number one priority in helping to manage my mental health and relationships on board. A few months down the line and a busy season nearing the end, it has been by far the best investment I have ever made in myself and my future. Karine is unique in having experienced life on board, with heightened emotions of living in close quarters for long periods of time, as well as having dealt with the eclectic bunch of people that make up your crew; making explaining day to day frustrations that much easier, which is something I didn't know I needed. Together we have focused on my core values, setting personal boundaries, accepting feedback (the good and bad) all which has made a monumental difference in my working relationships, self-confidence and overall personal life. Karine's support and guidance has played the most significant role in my success this season and I cannot thank her enough for the incredible time and effort she puts into everything she does. I feel valued and appreciated as a person, which in turn leaves me forever grateful. I am proud of what we've achieved so far, and I look forward to what's ahead. I can only hope more crew take the time to invest in themselves as there is no one more important than yourself. Thank you Karine.

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