

## *Coping with a Crisis*

...For the Employee/Staff

**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.

For help call: <b>PENN Behavioral Health at 1.888.321.4433</b>
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