



**Wisconsin Association for
Home and Community Education**

Working with People in Crisis Leader Guide



**WAHCE State Conference
Programs, Opportunities, Outreach and Leadership (P.O.O.O.L.)
September 2013**



Presented by:

**Kathy Metzenbauer, Family Living Agent
Juneau County UW-Extension
211 Hickory Street
Mauston, WI 53948
608-847-9329**

kathleen.metzenbauer@ces.uwex.edu

UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA

Wisconsin Association for Home and Community Education

Working with People in Crisis

P.O.O.L.

September 2013

Materials needed:

Small brown lunch bags

Pretzels – place 5-10 pretzels in some bags and no pretzels in others for each participant

Flip chart

Markers

Handouts for each participant

Script for leader

Objectives:

- Understand the characteristics in common with people that are in crisis.
- Explore guidelines that are used for working with people under stress.
- Learn about area resources.

Outline for Leaders:

I. Introduction

Pretend you are a single mother of three children ages 2, 4, and 6. You have just left an abusive relationship. You are estranged from your family. You have received little child support so have been living paycheck to paycheck from a minimum wage job. You are behind on paying your child care provider and on your rent. Today you get notice that you will be laid off from your job. Here is your bag of resources. (Pass out a bag to each person.)

A. Discussion: (list themes on flipchart)

Just as each of you had different amounts of pretzels, or no pretzels, people in our communities have different resources that are available to them.

- What did you think when you opened your bag and found out how many resources you had or did not have?
- Where or who would you turn to?
- What are your feelings when your needs are satisfied?
- What are you feeling when your needs are not satisfied? Who would you listen to you when you needed someone to talk to? When you need advice, who would you go to? Who could help you make decisions?
- How would you feel if I told you that you needed to do a budget because you had not managed your money well? Would a spending plan be relevant at this time?
- How would you feel if you went to a food pantry and heard one of the workers say to another that you did not need their services?
- What do you think your future will be?

B. Generational Poverty Survival Skills (handout)

How would you survive?

C. Often people do not know what resources are in their communities. In groups of 2-3, list resources that may help this young mother.

D. List resources on the flip chart.

What types of crises and situations are you seeing in your communities? What are your resources?

II. Strategies to Change Behavior

Do people need therapy or education during crisis? Quoting from Froma Walsh, author of *Strengthening Family Resilience*, it is both because knowledge and skills are needed for a person's well-being. One needs to understand the realities of life for these individuals. We have heard the term, 'walk in their shoes,' but what does that mean?

A. What is your perception of control? What is empowerment versus a handout?

The goal of empowerment is achieved through teaching the decision making process.

Sometimes people do not know how to achieve their goals. They may be overwhelmed by steps or options.

Many multi-stressed families become frustrated and mistrustful of well-intentioned 'helpers' because of repeated negative interactions and unhelpful experiences with numerous systems. Family survival strategies may lead members to guard against further involvement with professionals. Some families are in perpetual crisis, thus, are overwhelmed with tasks. Each new crisis interrupts focus on any one problem-solving effort. We must help people in crisis help themselves rather than doing the tasks for them.

III. Characteristics and Guideline for Helping (handout)

Resilience is especially challenging if an entire community is affected – loss of industry, storm damage or floods. Our own resilience is tested in work with major trauma and loss. It is helpful to draw strength from our own families, friends, communities and spiritual resources, just as it is for those we are assisting. We may suffer from compassion fatigue.

IV. Communication

Sometimes we take communication for granted, expecting those close to us to automatically know what we want or need. Is it always possible to correctly guess what someone else wants or needs? We listen to what someone says or we watch what he/she does and then we try to make sense of it – but we can only interpret according to our own set of personal circumstances.

Have you ever said something to someone and found that they did not understand your meaning and immediately became offended?

A. Communication Exercise (handout)

B. Types of communication

- Informative – sharing statements of fact, observation, general questions to get information; polite conversation
- Controlling – this kind is used to persuade or convince someone to agree with you or carry out your wishes. You want someone to accept your point of view but you really don't want any feedback – you want compliance.
- Intimate – this kind is used to express experiences, beliefs, values, and feelings at a more personal level. It includes “I” messages, honest questions and exploration of reasons, problem-solving and choices. Intimacy involves giving a little of oneself, risking a little more, being vulnerable to hurt or misunderstanding. This communication makes each person responsible for himself; it does not force an opinion on another. This requires being aware and paying attention to what is going on now. Each person must consider the feelings, wants, thoughts and experiences of himself and the other person involved and be able to express them.

C. Discussion

- What are some examples of each kind of communication in normal family life? What are cultural considerations that impact communication? What kind of communication do we use most of the time? What is the safest kind of communication? What is the most difficult for most of us to use?

Effective communication means being aware of what's going on, being able to fit the appropriate kind of communication to the situation at hand, and most importantly, having respect for each other. Effective communication takes place when we take time to try to understand each other and we give a little of ourselves. We then strengthen our bonds. Beginning right now, we can try to use more words of encouragement rather than discouragement.

V. Conclusion

Sometimes helping means waiting to be asked for help. Strong families are able to react to challenges so we need to help them deal positively with crisis. Resilience is not measured by wealth but by the creativity, unity and hope that helps families survive and thrive. Family resiliency is the ability to cultivate strengths within a family that will help all members meet the challenges of life positively. Because families show resiliency in unique ways, there are no universal rules for success. Resiliency involves not only the ability to cope with everyday stress; it also requires confidence, hard work and forgiveness to increase the family's well-being. (Clemson Extension, South Carolina. 2000)