



The CRISIS CYCLE

EXAMPLES OF REAL OR PERCEIVED THREATS

External Threats



Internal Threats



4

Crisis

A lack of control over emotions and behaviors

The point where you feel out of control, like you don't know what to do or how to stop what is happening. You are unable to access your skills or tools and your ability to use reason and logic is severely diminished.

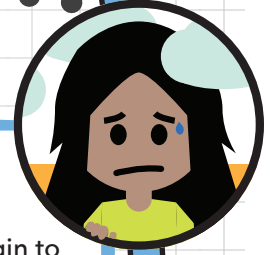


3

Escalation

Threat persists

Your ability to manage your emotions and behaviors become more difficult. Emotional and physical safety concerns increases. This can happen quickly or over a period of time.

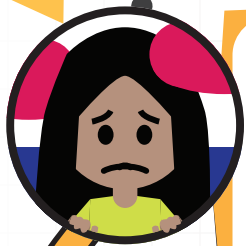


5

Recovery

A return to baseline

As the crisis diminishes, you begin to recover. You are able to eat, sleep, feel remorse, etc. You are able to start accessing reason and logic. Processing information becomes easier.

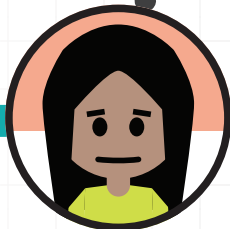


2

Activation

A real or perceived threat

Your nervous system is activated by a threat into fight, flight, freeze, or fawn (appealing) behaviors. The threat can be internal or external.



1

Baseline

A feeling of safety

You are feeling and acting like yourself. Daily life feels manageable.

1 BASELINE

Living at home outside of her community, Leticia experiences higher anxiety.

Strategy

I like watching novelas.

Smooch! Smooch!

Intervention

This is relaxing. ❤️

2 ACTIVATION

Ugh! I don't know anyone there.

Time to go to church, Leticia!

Don't rush me!!

Strategy

Written reminders ahead of the request are helpful, especially when I am feeling anxious or worried.

Got it!

Intervention

Hi Leticia, Remember: church at 6! ❤️ Foster Dad

3 ESCALATION

!@*%!

Strategy

When I'm upset, I will need time and space to calm down.

I understand.

Intervention

Let's give her a chance to cool off.

!@*%!

I hate this place!

SLAM!

4 CRISIS

I hate both of you!!!

SLAM!!

Strategy

When I'm super activated and in crisis is when I need your empathy and compassion the most. Be patient and don't judge me.

Intervention

Can we come in?

We just want to make sure you're safe. We don't have to talk right now.

5 RECOVERY

It's ok. Let's take it easy tonight.

Strategy

Validate that my feelings and thoughts make sense given what I've experienced. Don't ignore or minimize what happened. Be curious and ask me how best you can support me.

Intervention

How are you feeling today?

We're here for you. Are you ready to problem-solve together?

Suggested citation: Systems of Care Institute (2022). *Tool Time: The Crisis Cycle*. Portland, OR: Portland State University, Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services.