

*In the absence of information, we may begin to speculate and fill in uncertainties with worst cases.*



## What defines a crisis?

"...crisis is a perception or experience of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person's current resources and coping mechanisms." (James and Gilliland, 2001)

## Understanding Crisis Psychology

Without communication from a source that is trusted by the audience to lessen the psychological impact, negative emotions may lead to harmful individual or group behaviors.

- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Communicate empathy
- Communicate accurately
- Provide action messages
- Encourage empowerment to reduce fear and loss of control
- Provide trusted resources
- Be transparent, clear, and consistent

- Inability to judge multiple facts
- Not remembering as much as normal
- Mis-interpreting messages
- We may trust what is familiar
- Needing confirmation from others before taking action

### Information Processing

**People**  
 ...simplify messages  
 ...hold onto beliefs  
 ...seek additional information  
 ...believe the first message



### Mental States

Uncertainty, Anxiety, Fear  
 Dread, Hopelessness,  
 Helplessness, Denial,  
 Panic, Survival

### Behaviors

Special Treatment, Vicarious  
 Rehearsal, Stigmatization,  
 Distrust, Mistrust, Hoarding,  
 Stockpiling, Gossiping,  
 Avoidance, Passivity,  
 Confrontation, Aggression

- Provide reasonable expectations
- Explain resources available
- Emergency Plan of Action
- Careful representation of communication that does not divide or cause trauma for particular groups
- Clear and concise communication
- Fight or flight responses

Effective  
 Messaging  
 should be

**SIMPLE**  
**CREDIBLE**  
**CONSISTENT**  
**TIMELY**  
**REPEATED**

## Managing Crisis



- Do not hit the panic button.
- Consult your governing documents.
- If you have a plan, follow it.
- If you don't, create one and follow it.
- Establish a chain of command.
- Establish a decision calculus.
- Establish a single point of contact.
- Communicate protocols to appropriate parties.
- Gather information.
- Prepare internal and external messages.
- Update audiences frequently.

## Best Practices



- ✓ DO NOT PANIC
- ✓ PRACTICE EMPATHY
- ✓ MANAGE UNCERTAINTY
- ✓ BE TRANSPARENT
- ✓ SET GOALS FOR BEST CASE SCENARIO
- ✓ PLAN FOR THE WORST CASE SCENARIO
- ✓ BE AVAILABLE - UPDATE OFTEN
- ✓ PLAN AHEAD