

St. Laurence Catholic Church
CCE Home Study Parent Meeting – 10/23/17

How to Respond to a Crisis: Proven Strategies Under Trial by Fire

By Steven Brown MS. LPA/LSSP

- I. Immediate Response
 - A. Stay Calm
 - 1. Someone needs to be calm.
 - 2. Consider and develop your parent/teacher taking charge demeanor/look.
 - 3. If needed, put on your actress/actor cap.
 - 4. Teens often expect Parent over-reaction.
 - a. This immediate response is not the “Teaching Parent”.
 - b. It is not the “Providing Consequences Parent”.
 - c. It is not the “Frustrated with Teen Behavior Parent”.
 - d. The parent who is leading an immediate response to crisis is different.
 - 5. They need their “Caring Parent who knows what to do”.
 - B. Call on your Catholic Faith...and Pray!
 - 1. The Prayer to the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Any favorite prayer works here.
 - b. Ask for the Spiritual Gifts of the Spirit that Jesus Himself promised.
 - 2. Have Faith that God will provide what to say as He promised.
 - 3. Prayerful Mantras can help calm anxious thoughts.
- II. Set the Tone
 - A. Be fully Present to those who need you.
 - B. Give concise, firm directives when it is time.
 - C. Schools train all Special Educators and Administrators in Positive Behavioral Supports.
 - 1. Most of the training is how to deescalate situations.
 - 2. Teachers are trained to remove the audience.
 - 3. Teachers have crisis plans in which teacher and administrator help is summoned.
 - 4. Restraint safety training is to be used as a last resort to keep everyone safe.
 - 5. Parents should develop their own family plan for perhaps a fire or tornado.
 - 6. Including stay calm, set the tone, ongoing process and our faith can make your “fire” plan into a Crisis Plan that prepares your family for any crisis.
 - D. Listen to your Teen when they are in Teen Crisis
 - 1. Your directive can be, “Tell me what is going on”.
 - 2. Busy parents are often not perceived to be listening.
 - 3. The current situation is very important and challenging to your Teen.
 - 4. A Teen who perceives less than optimal support can make dangerous decisions.
 - 5. Listening very well is the best way to prevent Teen Crisis and Bad Outcomes.
 - 6. Steve’s turn and face them with full attention example.
 - E. When the crisis has calmed and it is Time, Process what happened with your Youth.
 - 1. Provide guidance.
 - 2. Listen again with much effort because this is when you discover unexpected thoughts.
 - 3. Give your Teens a first step or two toward “Our Response”.

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4. Remember to open and close with our Faith and let The Lord guide you.
- III. Situations involving Loss and Grief
- A. Loss of Grandparents.
 - B. Loss of Job or Home/ Change of Situation or Status (Floods and other events)
 - C. Less common and harder to understand losses like Death of a Child, Parent or Teacher.
 - D. The Human way to experience the stages of grief are very similar for any loss.
 1. How each person experiences each stage of grief varies.
 2. Your child or teen may experience early stages of grief (sadness, anger, denial) severely for any grief event.
 3. Message: Never Discount your child or teen.
 4. Do provide listening, caring and then, parent perspective.
- IV. Ongoing Process once the crisis has happened.
- A. The God Given Human Brain performs better when provided closure, even if it is “for now”.
 1. Closure can be just for today or for this week.
 2. If the current answer is we don’t know, assign a time in a few days to process this.
 3. Many hard questions or future tasks can be given a time and place, to be solved then.
 4. Cognitive Therapists refer to this process as Compartmentalization.
 - B. Keeping normalcy in a person’s routine to the degree possible also helps the human brain.
 1. It is amazing to watch how our schools perform in crisis situations.
 2. It is also amazing to watch the District’s whole counseling team.
 - C. A plan for what everyone can do and when it can be addressed helps the brain process.
 1. It is important not to dwell on presently unsolvable worry as it simply does not help.
 2. The purpose of worry is to warn or inform of needed action. It is good and normal.
 3. Continued and unaddressed worry only causes damage and pain.
 4. The brain is better at reducing anxiety to background levels when it experiences closure.
 5. Putting the “informed of problem” on your calendar, with promise to address, works!
 6. Putting all of the to dos and what ifs in their time and place is less overwhelming.
 - D. Praying for Patience and other Spiritual Gifts from God Truly helps Brain Neurology.
- V. Our Catholic Christian belief about the Why question:
One of our biggest unanswered worries/source of anxiety/and grief.
- A. Jesus Christ promised we will have Life everlasting in the Kingdom of God in Heaven.
 - B. God created Nature and the forces of Nature can favor us...or not.
 - C. God granted us Free Will out of Love and created us in the Image of God. He allows us to experience the logical results of our choices.
 - D. Jesus was questioned by his Disciples why only God can judge and why those who do evil are not punished (right now) by God. He told them No, that is not God’s way until the Final Coming of Jesus Christ. He let us know that evil would continue.
 - E. Sometimes, crisis events are the result of B, C and D. God is always with us, with His hand on our shoulder, living inside of us but His Kingdom of God on earth has not yet fully come. That is our job, to evangelize the world, beginning with your kids.

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- VI. Young People who have truly experienced significant Grief usually need Counseling.
 - A. www.gratiaplenacounseling.org Fully Licensed Psychological Services
 - B. All GP counselors have in addition, Theology Backgrounds, most with degrees in Theology.
 - C. GP also has a Priest, Pastoral Counselors, Spiritual Directors and a Sister who is licensed as an LPC Intern by the State of Texas.
 - D. For perhaps the first time, Catholics have counseling from a truly Catholic perspective.
 - E. Counseling for young people often helps them listen to Parent Guidance.
- VII. Parenting Adolescents with Catholicism Together (PACT)
 - A. www.stlaurence.org/pact
 - B. Wednesdays 7-8:15 during EDGE meetings in the Ave Maria Center.
 - C. Our website has numerous topic documents on ways to help your teen.
- VIII. National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) Pat Sumner of St. Laurence and NAMI Fort Bend
www.NAMI.org
- IX. The Best Preventative Preparation.
 - A. Our Faith is our number one answer to all things. Our understanding of what our Faith means to everything in life, has much room for improvement. Keeping a strong relationship with our Teens, with our Faith as the primary component, is the best way to prevent unnecessary Teen Crisis. For much more information on Parent Communication with Youth, Part 1 and 2, see the PACT website for these and many documents. www.stlaurence.org/pact

Questions for Consideration:

1. What Crisis events are my family facing now or in the past?
2. Am I teaching our Faith as a truly impactful way to face everything in our lives?
3. How could I more consistently listen to my youth in a way that helps them experience the depth of their parents caring, Love and guidance.
4. Do my Teens understand that they can and should talk to me even in severely embarrassing situations like social media bullying?
5. How can I put into practice the strategies presented in my family?
6. Do I remind myself and others about the power of the Mass to ask for and receive God's support, even in times of Crisis and Grief?
7. Does my family have any questions of Why to consider using V. above?
8. Are the provided resources something I can use to help my family?

Steve's Bio

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Part Time counselor at Gratia Plena Counseling, 32 years of experience with youth, parents and educators.

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CCE Home Study Parent Meeting – 10/23/17

Graduate of Briar Cliff University with degrees in Theology and Psychology (The Sisters of St. Francis)

Graduate of the University of North Texas with a Master's Degree in School Child Clinical Psychology

Married to Cindy Brown 25 years and active member of St. Laurence since 2014.

Retired Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, past Youth Minister and co-facilitator of PACT

15 years teaching the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Power of the Holy Spirit of God

Steve's favorite prayer to the Holy Spirit taught by a group of Sisters at my age 7.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your divine love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, who instructs the hearts of your faithful by the light of your Spirit, grant by that same Spirit that I might have right judgement in all things and always rejoice in your consolation.

Amen!