

**Defusing Crisis Situations  
Safely and Sanely**

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Defusing Crisis Situations 1

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**FAMILY INTERACTIONS**

# of Family Members		# of Groupings within Family
2		1
3		4
4		11
5		28
6		57
7		120
8		245
9		502
10		1017
11		2044
12	$X = 2 - (y + 1)$	4009

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**Fallacy of First Impulse**

When we act on our first impulses,  
we tend to key in on the  
misbehavior pattern instead of  
correcting the problem.



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“Angry people are often unaware of their goals. Their behavior, though illogical to others, makes sense to them at the time.”



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### Ways to Influence and Encourage

- Focus on strengths
- Catch them “being good”
- Recognize effort and improvement
- Show faith
- Build self-respect
- Build attachment



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### CRISIS THEORY

**Crisis:**  
A predictable emotional state which results when people are subjected to overwhelming and unmanageable stress



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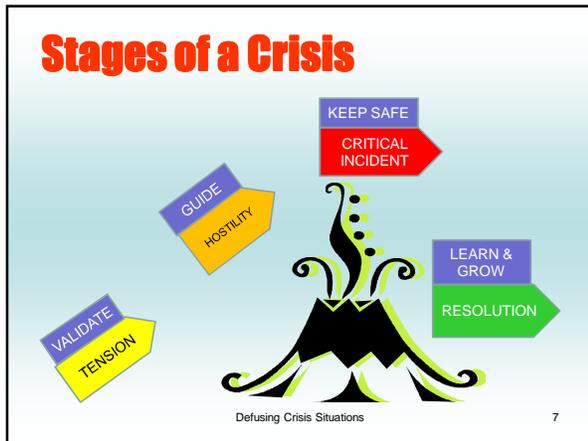
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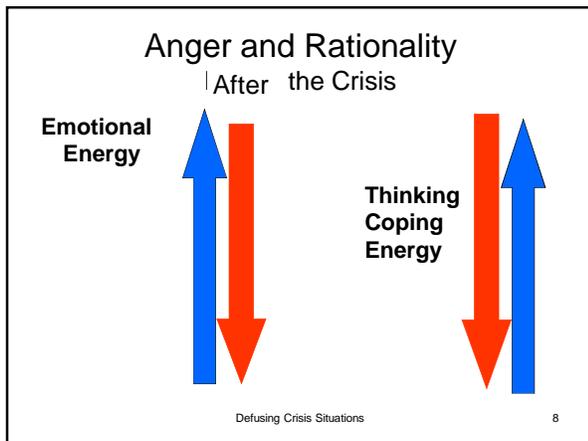
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- ### Blocks to Active Listening
- ✖ Our thoughts race ahead of the speaker.
  - ✖ We argue mentally with the speaker.
  - ✖ We don't "look" while we listen.
  - ✖ We fake attention, think about other things.
  - ✖ Our emotions kick in.
  - ✖ We interrupt frequently.
  - ✖ We want to jump in to offer advice.
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## What Bugs You?



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lying</li> <li>• Stealing</li> <li>• Cheating</li> <li>• Delinquency</li> <li>• Refusing to Eat</li> <li>• Setting Fires</li> <li>• Hyperactivity</li> <li>• Clinging</li> <li>• Withdrawing</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Masturbating</li> <li>• Fighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Bed Wetting</li> <li>• Day Wetting</li> <li>• Refusing to Talk</li> <li>• Incessant Talking</li> <li>• Violating Curfew</li> <li>• Whining</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Victimized Others</li> <li>• Abusing House Rules</li> <li>• Disrespect</li> <li>• Sexism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad Language</li> <li>• Destructive Acts</li> <li>• Soiling Pants</li> <li>• Alcohol/Drugs</li> <li>• Hiding Food</li> <li>• Skipping School</li> <li>• Running Away</li> <li>• Helplessness</li> <li>• Sexual Acting Out</li> <li>• Poor Hygiene</li> </ul>
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## ANGER

- Anger is an unmet need.
- Another feeling happened first.
- Anger is normal.
- Expressed in healthy ways, anger helps:
  - build understanding,
  - promote trust,
  - clear the air,
  - generate energy, and
  - motivate action.



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## Communicating Under Fire

<p><b>Do's</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain calm and collected</li> <li>• Listen empathetically</li> <li>• Be aware of space and body language</li> <li>• Stay on track</li> <li>• Set limits, but give <i>choices</i></li> <li>• Make like a sieve</li> <li>• Find an element of truth</li> <li>• Maintain respect for the person</li> <li>• Acknowledge feelings</li> <li>• Use "I" statements and reflection</li> <li>• Keep statements short and simple</li> <li>• Take a break, if needed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Don'ts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow <i>your</i> buttons to be pushed</li> <li>• Overreact</li> <li>• Get into a power struggle</li> <li>• Fight fire with fire</li> <li>• Be degrading</li> <li>• Discount feelings</li> <li>• Say "ought" or "should"</li> <li>• Collect or hang onto anger</li> <li>• Personalize anger</li> <li>• Get defensive</li> </ul>
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### Why Hands Off?



- Physical contact escalates emotions.
- Physical contact increases chances of injury.
- There were 142 documented deaths in restraint between 1988 and 1998 nationally.
- The leading cause of death in restraint is not technique; it's asphyxiation.
- Restraint can be dangerous when you are home alone with a child, and you have no back-up staff as in an institution.

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### Planning Environmental Safety

- Personal Space
- Body Language
- Physical Layout of the Place
  - Escape Routes
  - Obstacles and Hazards
  - Potential Weapons
  - Safety Shields and Tools



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### Creating Safe Zones

- Bedroom
- Porch, deck or safe place outdoors
- Table seating
- Couch or rocking chair
- Quiet corner
- "Walk it or talk it" options



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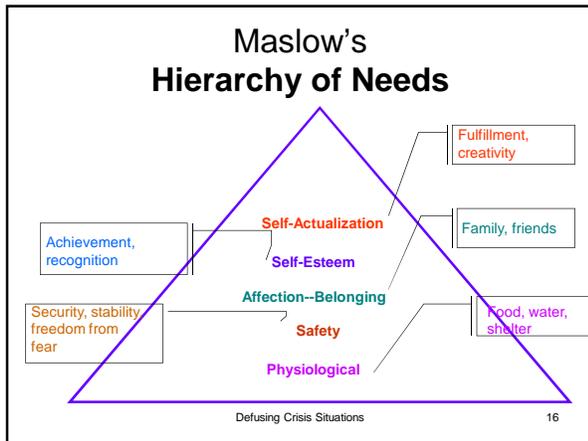
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- ### Five Basic Psychological Needs
1. Safety/Survival
  2. Belonging
  3. Power
  4. Freedom
  5. Fun
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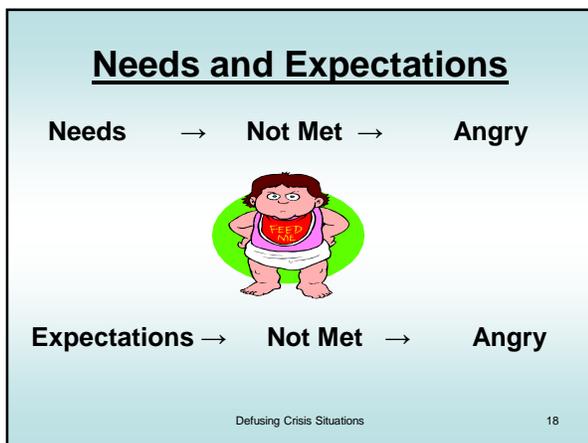
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### Children misbehave because...

- They are impulsive;
- They are striving for independence;
- They do not understand the rules or expectations;
- It can be fun!
- They need to release tension caused by intense feelings;
- They are influenced by their peers;
- They may lack the ability to control themselves ( e.g., ADHD);
- They are normal, energetic and exuberant.



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### Alternatives to Inappropriate Behavior

- Physical stress-relieving techniques
- Verbal/Thought-Channeling Techniques

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### Directions for "A"

1. Put "B's" hand in the starting position.
2. Guide with VOICE only:
  - Specific directions,
  - Lots of encouragement,
  - Good!
  - Patience in attitude and voice.



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### Directions for "B"

- Put "A's" hand in the starting position.
- Guide with VOICE only:
  - Vague, unclear directions,
  - Harsh, critical words,
  - Impatient attitude and voice.



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### Scoring Chart for Diagnostic Checklist

- Utopia
- Peak experience
- Indicators of some discomfort
- Rundown; a significant degree of burnout
- Acute state; clear need of intervention and support
- Moving into clinical depression
- Unable to cope; an effort to get out of bed



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### ACTION PLANS

What will you take home with you from this workshop?



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**DEFUSING CRISIS SITUATIONS SAFELY AND SANELY**

**AGENDA**

- I. Introductions and Workshop Goals
- II. Definition and Development of a Crisis
- III. What We Bring to a Crisis
- IV. Nonverbal Communication
- V. Communicating Under Fire/Why Hands Off
- VI. Protection of Self and Others
- VII. What Sets Kids Off
- VIII. Path Across the Pond Activity
- IX. Self Care/Learning and Processing
- X. Review, Action Plan/Evaluation

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Participants will become acquainted with each other and
- acknowledge their years of experience as foster caregivers.
- Participants will be able to define a crisis or explosive situation.
- Participants will be able to describe the stages of crisis development.
- Participants will be able to explain personal factors that they bring to a crisis.
- Participants will be able to explain the importance of body language in contributing to a crisis situation.
- Participants will be able to describe verbal strategies for responding appropriately to conflict.
- Participants will be able to recognize barriers to effective responses to crisis.
- Participants will be able to recognize child factors that may contribute to a crisis situation.
- Participants will be able to recognize the value of pre-planning with children for times of emotional distress.
- Participants will be able to describe safe zones within a home for children to find emotional safety.
- The participants will be able to explain factors that may contribute to a child's escalation of anger and potential crisis.
- Participants will be able to recognize how positive verbal reinforcement can help diffuse a crisis.
- Participants will be able to describe how a crisis can result in change and new ways of responding.
- Participants will be able to develop effective techniques to care for self in response to stress.

**COMPETENCIES**

926-05-001	Understands the common causes of crises in caregiving families
926-05-002	Understands how a crisis develops
926-05-003	Understands how a caregiver or adoptive parent can either encourage or reduce crisis
926-05-004	Understands the importance of early recognition of factors that may trigger extreme emotional reactions in foster, kinship, and adopted children
926-05-006	Knows how to reduce anger and re-direct negative behavior in both the child and caregiver/parent in order to prevent a crisis
926-05-007	Knows how to plan for safety for all family members during a potential crisis
926-05-008	Can recognize when a situation is developing into a crisis
926-06-001	Knows when a situation becomes a crisis. Knows how crises can involve extreme emotions and behaviors
926-06-002	Knows the stages of crisis and signs of crisis at each stage
926-06-003	Knows how to reduce anger and re-direct negative behavior in both the child and caregiver/parent in order to defuse a crisis
926-06-005	Understands how crisis may be an opportunity teach good problem-solving skills
926-06-006	Understands how crisis may be an opportunity to build attachment with a child
926-06-007	Knows how to plan for safety for all family members during a crisis
926-06-008	Knows the potential effects of crisis on the caregiving family
926-06-010	Can use the crisis as a way to enhance attachment to the family and teach good problem-solving skills
927-02-001	Knows how a different cultural viewpoint can affect relationships with foster or adopted children and their families



# Values

Worksheet for Foster Care Providers

	True	False	Not Sure
1. Youth should respect their elders.	_____	_____	_____
2. Foster parents should do everything possible to control a youth's behavior.	_____	_____	_____
3. It is sometimes okay to spank young children.	_____	_____	_____
4. Swearing and "talking back" are not to be tolerated from youth.	_____	_____	_____
5. Being honest is very important in our home.	_____	_____	_____
6. It's okay for youth to feel and show anger in my home.	_____	_____	_____
7. It's okay for parents to feel and show anger in my home.	_____	_____	_____
8. Anger is an unhealthy feeling that must be controlled.	_____	_____	_____
9. People choose how they react to anger.	_____	_____	_____
10. Foster youth can easily pull or force adults into power struggles.	_____	_____	_____

# Group Questions

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1. When you were a child, what did you learn about anger, and how was it expressed in your family?



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2. When you get angry as an adult in your house, what do you do?

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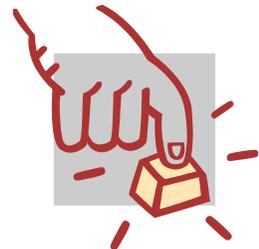
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3. When people around you get angry today, what is a sure-fire way to push your buttons?

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# Expectations

Realistic      Unrealistic      Not Sure

1. If I show youth love and affection, they will do as I want them to do.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The youth we take into our home will appreciate our efforts on their behalf.

\_\_\_\_\_



3. If I show them love, everything will be all right.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. All I have to do is to treat them like one of my own and they will quit their misbehavior.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. If I tell them, they should listen.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I should be able to help any youth that comes into my home. If I don't, I'm a failure.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Calm, Cool, Collected: That's Me!

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### Validating Responses (*Be there for them...from their perspective*)

- Acknowledge what you see, feel
- Listen actively (*What's the real issue?*)
- Validate the person's feeling
- Help them label their feelings and learn coping skills
- Be nonjudgmental, empathetic
- Try to meet needs
- Give comfort, support
- Offer to help
- Give time, if needed

- "You seem to be kind of stressed"
- "I understand why you're feeling angry. It makes me angry, too."
- "I'm sorry that happened to you."
- "I'm here to listen if you feel like talking."
- "I've been noticing that you are lately. Is something bothering you?"
- "You look a little tired. Would you like to rest for a few minutes?"
- "Would you like a snack and some time to talk about it?"
- "What's wrong, Sue?"
- "Whew! Must have been a bad day!"
- "How can I help?"



### Guiding Responses (*Maintain sanity and set direction*)

- Stabilize emotions
- Set limits
- Give choices (simple, clear, reasonable, enforceable)
- Remember irrationality
- Don't personalize
- Redirect back to issues and stay focused
- Agree with the 2% that's true
- State inappropriateness and why
- Take a cool-off break if needed
- Use silence and body language as tools
- Stay flexible, but consistent with "bottom line"

"I know you plan to call Joe at 4:00 today. If your room is clean, you can do it. But if your room isn't clean, you will lose your phone privileges. Then you won't get to talk to Joe at all."

"It's true, I'm not your mother. But I still need you to help us here."

### Safety and Well-Being Responses

*Defusing Crisis Situations Safely and Sanely*  
Ohio Child Welfare Training Program – June 2006

*Out-of-Control Verbal Situations*

If it's verbal only, keep it verbal  
Keep your verbal messages brief  
Use silence and body language as tools  
Use low pitch, low volume and slower rate of speaking  
Remove the audience or the person out-of-control  
Avoid "refueling" the fire with your own comments  
Restate choices with the positive first  
Keep out of personal space  
Create safe zones  
Take threats seriously: document and report  
Allowing some venting can reduce emotional energy  
Treat with care and respect

"Let's try to calm down so we can talk about this sensibly."  
"Do you need to take a break?"  
"How can I help?"



*Out-of-Control Physical situations*

Use the out-of-control verbal techniques above to calm the situation  
Recognize the power of adrenaline  
Allow an escape route  
Remove others, including pets and yourself, to places of safety  
Back off pressure  
Get help

**Hands-on only as a last resort for safety**

Use restraint only in keeping with your own agency policy

Have restraint policy in case plan; know if restraints are permitted and when they are permitted; be trained in them; **report and document every time there is physical intervention**  
Be aware of the physical environment and potential hazards

# Tools for Keeping Cool

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- ☞ Be aware of your own body signals.
- ☞ Count to 10, or 50, or 100!
- ☞ Take slow, deep breaths.
- ☞ Listen to soothing music.
- ☞ Run your fingers over a smooth, silky surface.
- ☞ Hug a pillow or stuffed animal.
- ☞ Write a letter. . .then burn or tear up.
- ☞ Let a piece of hard candy dissolve slowly in your mouth.



- ☞ Talk a break, a walk.
- ☞ Douse your face with cool water.
- ☞ Visualize a peaceful scene.
- ☞ Phone a friend.
- ☞ Get active – run, shoot baskets, dance, do pushups, jumping jacks or aerobics.
- ☞ Tell yourself: “What will matter most an hour from now?”

# Reasons Foster Children Might Feel Angry

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1. Children who have been deserted, neglected or abused feel more anger than most other children. This is because their fundamental human needs have not been adequately met.
2. Children in foster care often feel they are to blame for being taken away from their parents. They are angry at themselves.
3. Children in placement often feel that their foster family is attempting to replace their biological family. Children can become very angry about these real or imagined attempts.
4. Inconsistent discipline in their previous environment may lead to anger when, for example, rules are implemented and enforced.
5. As children grow close to the people with whom they live in foster care, they may transfer some of their angry feelings from their biological family to these people.
6. When we are threatened, we feel angry. Sometimes we attack what is threatening us: however, sometimes we must hold back our anger to protect ourselves and others. This produces a tension that may lead us to take out our feelings on a safer object, such as a caring foster parent.
7. When people are not allowed to express their anger, they often get even angrier.

# Diagnostic Checklist

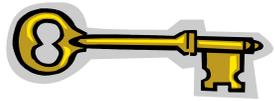
Use this scale for rating:

<b>1</b> Never	<b>2</b> Once or Twice	<b>3</b> Rarely	<b>4</b> Sometimes	<b>5</b> Often	<b>6</b> Usually	<b>7</b> Always
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<b>During the last six months I have felt:</b>	<b>How Often?</b>
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1. Physically exhausted.....	
2. Physically run down and prone to physical symptoms.....	
3. That my sleep was not as peaceful as I expected.....	
4. Emotionally exhausted, empty, or as if I had nothing more to give.....	
5. Hopeless, as if things always have been and always will be disappointing.....	
6. Helpless to change the situation.....	
7. Like a failure, like nothing I ever did was nothing very much .....	
8. Disillusioned about colleagues, administrators, and other people I was/am working with.....	
9. Resentment about my foster children.....	
10. Depressed.....	

<b>Total Score:</b>	
<b>Average:</b>	



## Key Concepts

1. Anger is an \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           What's the need we are dealing with?*  
*What triggered the incident?*
  
2. Physical intervention with an out-of-control individual is used  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           Am I in control of my own behavior?*  
*Is this the only option open to me?*
  
3. The leading reason people get hurt in escalating situations is  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           Am I giving enough personal space?*
  
4. A key to de-escalating any crisis situation is being a skilled  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           Do I know what is fueling this outburst?*  
*Can I sense the other person's perspective?*
  
5. There is high correlation between allegations of abuse and \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           Are my expectations realistic in this situation?*
  
6. The adult response to the first three stages of crisis build-up are:  
 Tension \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hostility \_\_\_\_\_  
 Critical Incident \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. After the critical incident is over and we are once again calm, we have the perfect opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_  
*Self Talk:           Have we come full circle?*  
*How can we use this critical incident as an opportunity?*