

# MOOC 1 UNIT 4

## Critical incident stress management

### Chapter 1

### pre-crisis assessment

*“The calm before the storm...”*

Developed by Association of Clinical Psychologists (CZ)

# Pre-Crisis Assessment

## TOPIC DESCRIPTION

The aim of pre-crisis assessment is to **prevent crisis from happening** or **to be prepared for a crisis**. Specifically in this chapter you will learn more about:

- Different types of critical incidents and what information is necessary to properly evaluate a crisis
- Possibilities to enhance readiness for a critical incident
- Importance of primary preparation via primary prevention and education
- Mitigation of the impacts of the event
- Useful tips for effective communication

Methods used in pre-crisis assessment:

- Evaluation
- Preparation
- Communication





# Introduction

Pre-crisis period is a **preparatory time**, before anything even happens.

→ The leading aim is to **enhance readiness** of an individual, a team, a group or a whole society to face a critical incident, and to **mitigate the impacts** of this event.

- ✓ The basics are to have **knowledge** on acute stress reaction, stress responses
- ✓ You also need to master **self-care techniques**; therefore to be able to prepare yourself and others for whatever may happen during a crisis.
- ✓ You can **learn a lot from previous critical incidents** and get prepared for several possible scenarios
- ✓ You can profit from **gathering all possible or useful materials** (pamphlets, contacts, list of further support).
- ✓ When a critical incident happens, it is necessary to **properly evaluate the type of the event and its' potential impact**, and then to communicate within and out of the organization.





# 1.1 Evaluation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

During the evaluation you need to assess the critical incident and evaluate its potential impact.

There are **different types of events**:

- Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, car accidents, homicides, suicides, etc. → The sequence of steps differs depending on the type of the event.

**What you need to evaluate:**

☐ Antecedents

- if there is any sign that the incident is going to happen, therefore you can activate a plan

☐ Schedule

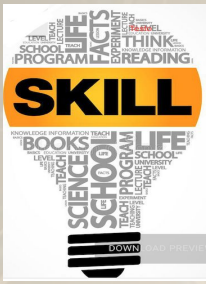
- if the event runs on a similar schedule or if it is more random (e.g. natural catastrophes)



# 1.1 Evaluation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

**What you need to evaluate:**

- Potential victims
  - individual, groups, societies; if there are any vulnerable ones (e. g. Elderly, children, ...), check the possibility of secondary victims
- Location of a situation
  - property details, background of the situation, type of involved organizations
- Available resources
  - list of material and human resources that might be useful in the current situation

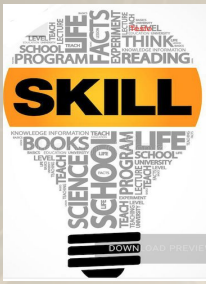


## 1.2 Evaluation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

Main skills that you need in the evaluation part are linked to organization and time-management. This part of Critical Incident Stress Management is usually time-framed, under pressure, and needs a huge range of knowledge or experience from previous incidents.

→ The main output of the evaluation is to **expect the potential impact of the situation.**





## 1.2 Evaluation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

Skills you need for an effective evaluation are:

- **Knowledge of previous events** -> study as many previous critical incidents as possible, learn from mistakes that were made before, remember or write down useful tips or creative solutions
- **Analytical reasoning** -> try to discern pattern within the information, learn to expect several possibilities, comprehend basic structure of the events, differentiate between facts and opinions
- **Time-management** -> time planning and organization between several tasks, make a list and prioritize, don't hesitate to forward tasks on other group members
- **Organization** -> prepare step-by-step lists or checklists, list of important contacts, materials that can become handy in a situation of crisis



## 1.3 Evaluation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

These are the most crucial abilities you need to develop to provide a proper evaluation of a crisis:

- You need to provide a **precise description** of the critical situation
  - Type, location, antecedents, schedule, time-frame
- Provide an **expert expectation** of potential impact
  - Number and type of the victims & resources that might be needed
- **Activate** a group or first responders or an emergency plan
  - Competence to activation and knowledge of the process and triggers of the activation
- Activate **further rescuers and resources**
  - Contact for further psychological and psychiatric help in the area, knowledge of their current availability
- Recognize **your own ability** to be a part of the incident management
  - Self-caring techniques, good contact with your own needs and options



1 - Short checklist for evaluation





## 2.1 Preparation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

Preparation time is an opportunity to diminish the outcomes of the critical incident. Proper preparation leaves you more confident and brings you certainty in a situation of emergency.

Preparation includes all the activities and processes designed to prevent, contain, and recover from crises.

→ The aim is to increase the readiness for a possible critical event.



**2 - Pamphlet - acute stress reaction**

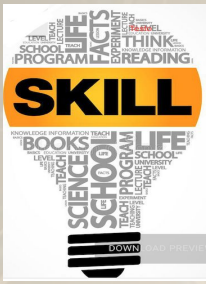
**3 - Pamphlet - stress and its impact**



## 2.1 Preparation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

### Possibilities to increase preparedness:

- **Primary prevention** alias Training
  - The aim is to provide basic knowledge on stress and trauma topics
  - Stress reactions: Fight – Flight – Freeze – Tend & Befriend
  - Acute stress reaction symptoms: cognitive, behavioural, somatic, and emotional
  - Coping mechanisms: good and bad ones
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- **Self-care** techniques
  - List of self-care techniques to highlight the importance of self-care
- Drafts of **plans**
- Regular **exercise** of critical situation



## 2.2 Preparation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

The most useful approach to become prepared for a crisis is to prepare not only yourself but also others, and to help them know what they should expect in that kind of a situation, therefore the skill is **training**. The second most important skill is **self-care**.

### How to prepare a training:

1. Specify training goals and objectives
2. Present subject method in a logical order, from basics to more detailed information.
3. Emphasize the most important points.
4. Customize training materials to your students or listener.
5. Incorporate interactive methods to keep trainees involved.
6. Write a training session plan with all activities, be prepared to interchange it, prolong or shorten it.
7. Prepare training materials (tools, handouts, etc.)

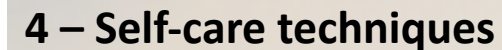
*You can learn more on [simplifytraining.com](http://simplifytraining.com)*

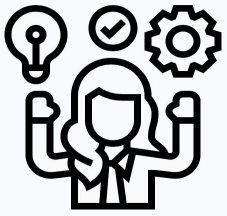




= conscious act taken to promote your own physical, mental, and emotional health.

- Prepare your own personalized self-care plan and start NOW!*





## 2.3 Preparation – Pre-Crisis Assessment

A good pre-crisis management involves material and personnel preparation that enhances their readiness in an emergency situation, foremost educated people who know what stress is and how to efficiently manage it. Stress management is the most valued competence in crisis preparation.

### STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES:

#### Short-term:

- Guided imagery
- Meditation
- Breathing techniques
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Walking (in nature)
- A hug from a loved one
- Aromatherapy
- Artwork



#### Long-term:

- Enough and regular sleep
- Balanced-diet
- Leisure-time activities
- Yoga
- Express gratitude
- Regular physical exercise
- Connection with social support (Family, friends)
- Reassess to-do-lists





## 3.1 Communication – Pre-Crisis Assessment

Effective communication is the key factor to survive in a situation of a crisis, it can be divided into **internal** and **external** communication. Effective communication builds **trust**; when a person or group feels talked to instead of **listened to**, trust is not likely to result. You need to remember that communication is **not a one-way street**.

### Preparation time:

- Get familiar in the team
- Pre-draft some crisis messages and communications
- Establish relationships with reporters and media



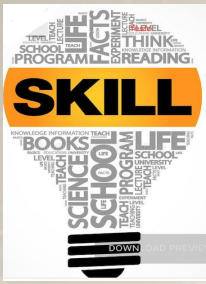


## 3.1 Communication – Pre-Crisis Assessment

### Execution time:

- Identify key messages to communicate
- Within the team: start a real-time multiple-ways communication (i. e. instant messaging)
- Decide on communication methods
  - Social media, TV, Internet, Surveys
- **And be prepared to ride out the storm!**





## 3.2 Communication – Pre-Crisis Assessment

Skill of communication must be trained and developed, the adequate spokesperson must be chosen based on his/her experience and position.

We can divide the communication into three separate skills; effective communication, team communication and external communication. The basics are in effective communication.

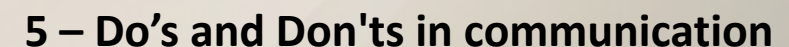
### **Effective communication:**

- Listen reflectively
- Control your emotions
- Stay focused on the topic
- Attention to nonverbal communication & paralanguage
- Provide feedback
- Appreciate others
- Ask for résumé



- Know names and time availability
- Check on team members on a regular basis
- Divide responsibilities
- Share compliments, appreciate the members

- Set the regular time of information release
- Always check the level of privacy of the shared information
- Monitor reactions







## 3.3 Communication – Pre-Crisis Assessment

**How to deliver a quality message ...** is the most important competence in communication. Therefore, there are recommendations:

- Directly address the issue
- Don't dismiss or belittle outside concerns
- Be empathetic
- Keep it authentic
- Be as transparent as possible
- Phrase your responses using positive words

**Management and support for team members ...** is the important goal of the communication. To do so, it is necessary that:

- Communication is fluent and in real time
- Everyone in the team knows his/her role and competences, and feels important and meaningful
- Team leader is aware of each member readiness and availability



# Conclusion

## SUMMARY

A pre-crisis phase is a time of opportunity that allows you to do anything to feel more prepared for what is going to happen during a critical incident.

- Steps:
  - Evaluation
  - Preparation
  - Communication
- Key Points:
  - Learn from previous critical incidents, study antecedents, scenarios, and mistakes
  - Think of different options, prepare step by step guides
  - Primary prevention & information materials on stress and trauma
  - Self-care & Relaxation techniques
  - Effective communication with reflective listening





# Pre-Crisis Assessment

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