Psychological
Early
Intervention

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MOOC 1 – Unit 1
History and approaches

Chapter 1
Origin of Psychological
Crisis Intervention

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Chapter 1
Origin of Psychological Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention is a relatively new field in psychology. Its origins are usually dated from the 1940's and 1950's with Erich Lindemann's pioneering work on grief and bereavement after the Coconut Grove Club fire in Boston and with the work of Gerald Caplan at Harvard University.

However, the recognition that humans need specific interventions when life stresses become acute or more complicated over time, leading to debilitating conditions, comes also from other helping professions. Social workers were among the first to determine that interventions for severe distress needed to be treated differently than other disorders or diagnoses.

A major contribution to crisis intervention comes from the observation of war trauma. Thomas William Salmon's research about World War I (WWI), and later Abram Kardiner and Herbert Spiegel's research during World War II (WWII) determined that the three principles of crisis intervention are: immediacy, proximity, and expectancy.

The three principles of crisis intervention are:

Immediacy of interventions - Crises are emotionally hazardous situations that usually place people at high risk for maladaptive coping. Therefore presence and intervention as quickly as possible is paramount.

Proximity to the occurrence of the event - Familiar environment is reassuring for the victim.

Expectancy that the victim will return to adequate functioning - A crisis intervention provider should be familiar, optimistic and hopeful for the client, even when a situation seems hopeless. The therapist should instill a sense of hope and provide encouraging words for victims.

Read more:
https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/crisis-intervention

1.1   The Beginnings of Preventive Psychiatry

Almost all contemporary approaches to the psychology of crisis draw from the classic concepts of Erich Lindeman and Gerald Caplan. They are considered the creators and pioneers of crisis intervention.

In an article published in 1944 in the American Journal of Psychiatry, "Symptomatology and management of acute grief" E. Lindemann shared his experience of working with relatives of the victims of a tragic fire in one of the Boston clubs, where about 800 people celebrated the victory of the football team. About 500 of them died.

In this and other works, Lindeman proposed a new understanding of crisis, encouraging a different view of how people experience the crisis of acute mourning, and promoting the first forms of help for them - crisis intervention. What seems to be the most important in his conclusions, apart from practical directives, is a redefinition of the normality of the lived experience in the face of an extremely traumatic situation. Looking at the process of experiencing the tragedy of losing loved ones in many of his clients/patients, he found that there is a certain common pattern of experiencing.

Learn more: https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/11/29/erich-lindemann-cocoanut-grove-fire-grief/

Concepts of Erich Lindeman and Gerald Caplan

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Erich Lindeman

Crisis (according to Gerald Caplan, an American psychiatrist and one of the creators of crisis intervention, who worked out a scheme of crisis reaction) is a situation which arises when a person encounters obstacles on his way to achieving important life goals and is not able to overcome these obstacles with the help of previously applied methods of problem solving; a crisis makes a person lose their balance and enter a state of imbalance and disorganisation.
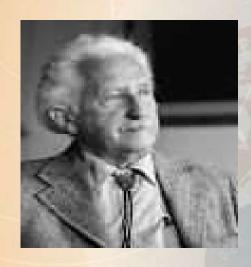
Learn more: https://youtu.be/aMrAOdvqP5Q

While the origins of crisis theory are attributed to Lindemann, the work of Gerald Caplan and his colleagues at Harvard University provided the foundations for the development of crisis intervention theory and practice. Caplan's interest in crises resulted from his work with families immigrating to Israel following World War II.

G. Caplan, in his publications, pointed to such aspects of the definition of crisis as: an obstacle on the way to important life goals, its immovability by means of customary methods of coping with difficulties, the accompanying period of disorganization, temporary breakdown, and abortive, ineffective efforts to overcome difficulties. He also wrote that crises result from obstacles to important goals in life, which people think they cannot overcome through habitual choices and behaviours.

Most of these definitions of crisis stem from the initial contributions of Lindemann and Caplan, although important additions and refinements have been made by later theorists. An important contribution to the theory of crises was made by Erik H. Erikson, who emphasized the developmental abilities of the ego to constructively solve the tasks that a person is meeting at subsequent stages of life.

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As Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994) - a psychoanalyst from the USA - observed, human development is marked by: "a succession of internal and external conflicts which the vital personality overcomes, emerging each time from the crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase in the power to judge and an increase in the capacity to do good according to its own standards and the standards of those who are significant to it."

The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity [w:] H. Fitzgerald (ed.), Developmental Psychology, New York 1970, s. 46-81.

1.2   Crisis and Community Psychology

The subject of community psychology remains the study of relationships between network structures and the functions of society and the problems of the functioning of individuals and their positive adaptation. A significant role is assigned to environmental, natural groups' help and support. Social movements play an important, irreplaceable role, as does the involvement of volunteers, professionals, and para-professionals (to some extent replacing or complementing the work of specialist institutions and professionally prepared interveners).

There are two aspects of response to community disasters: the need for clear organizational leadership at the disaster and the evolving perspectives on the types of mental health interventions provided during disaster.

The psychological aspect of the response relies on how individual professionals can assist their communities by providing advice on mental health planning and responses to community-wide disasters.

1.3   Psychological Intervention and Social Policy

Psychological intervention focused primarily on individuals, families, and small groups. This micro-level focus, although productive, sometimes must be complemented by macro-level interventions. Since the challenges affect significant numbers of people, interventions need to occur on a large scale if any significant impact is to be felt, and the scale is normally achieved only through macro-level policy implementation or large scale programmatic intervention carried out with the support of policy makers and other major stakeholders. The psychological aspect of macro intervention relates mainly to ensuring an adequate level of helping relationship. Macro-level intervention leads to an adequate level of security and can only be accomplished through planned actions by politicians and people in power.

The successful application of macro-social interventions is possible when different strategies are used in complementary ways. After all, new government policies are more likely to be implemented if there is a sufficient base of popular support for the new measures. Conversely, strong popular sentiments frequently induce leaders to make policy changes.

Learn more:
https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/13857/pdf/30.-wessells-dawes-in-stevens-macro-level-interventions.pdf

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1.4   Crisis Theories and Their Relevance to Crisis Intervention

The **subjective perspective** of the response to a crisis allows us to distinguish several main ways of understanding the essence of the crisis. For example:

Crisis as a loss of balance
Crisis as a lack of resources and the blockage of coping strategies
Crisis as a turning point, forcing life changes
Crisis as a threat to the sense of meaning and value system
Crisis as a threat to self-image and sense of identity

An individual response to a crisis situation may include several such attitudes.

From the **intervener's perspective**, we can indicate to at least three ways of understanding the directions assistance should be provided: searching for emotional balance, finding the cognitive framework organizing thinking and creating the social conditions to survive the crisis.

The equilibrium model assumes that the purpose of the intervention is to restore the person's psychological balance. It is useful when the person in crisis is confused and cannot make rational choices.

The cognitive model assumes that the source of crisis responses is an unrealistic assessment of events and situations and there is little knowledge on how to deal with a difficult situation. It is useful for people who are already emotionally stabilized.

The model of psychosocial transformation assumes that both personal and environmental difficulties may be responsible for the response to a crisis. The purpose of the intervention is to help the client adequately assess the internal and external factors contributing to the crisis and then initiate changes in the system and individual sphere.

Remember!

The aim of the intervention is to restore the person's mental balance.

The source of crisis reactions is an unrealistic evaluation of events and situations and little knowledge of how to cope with a difficult situation.

Both personal and environmental difficulties may be responsible for the crisis reaction.

The aim of the intervention is to help the client adequately assess the internal and external factors that have contributed to the crisis.

1.5   Glossary of Crisis Intervention

Early psychological intervention refers to all types of psychological intervention in emergencies (not only those of emergency psychologists / psychotherapists).

Psychological first aid and psychosocial support refers to the basic psychological support (stabilization, orientation, social network, psychoeducational information, etc.) that other rescuers can also give.

Trauma-focused psychological interventions refers to the first or second level specialist intervention indicated, meaning first and second level assessment and diagnosis (first level) and intervention recommended by evidence (second level). Psychological interventions include trauma focused therapies, such as TFCBT and EMDR, and non-trauma focused therapies such as stress management, supportive therapy/non-directive counselling and psychodynamic therapy. Group work using trauma focused and non-trauma focused techniques is also used.

Key Concepts in Intervention

- Early psychological intervention

- Psychological first aid and psychosocial support

- Trauma-focused psychological interventions

- Psychological interventions include trauma focused therapies, such as TFCBT and EMDR, and non-trauma focused therapies such as stress management, supportive therapy/non-directive counselling and psychodynamic th

Learn more: https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/eric%20digests/95-034.pdf

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