

## TCI – Module Six Assessing a Crisis Situation



### How to assess a situation before reacting

Adults can avoid becoming engaged in negative interactions if they are positive and respectful and have good relationship and communication skills. As a prerequisite to assuming responsibility for managing a crisis, adults need to understand the organisations expectations, be able to self-regulate, have supportive and trusting relationships with the young people, and be fully trained and skilled in crisis prevention techniques. Adequate support and direct supervision help promote positive practice formation and reflection.

### Assessing the Situation: Four Questions We Ask Ourselves Before Intervening

Before jumping into a situation and reacting, it is critical to stop and think about what the most appropriate response would be given the factors involved. Four questions to ask at the onset as well as at every phase of a potential crisis to identify the most appropriate intervention strategies are:

1. What am I feeling now?
2. What does this child feel, need, expect, or want?
3. How is the environment affecting the situation?
4. How do I best respond?

#### 1. What Am I Feeling Now? How do I want the young person to experience me in this moment?

Adults who are skilled at “use of self” understand themselves, can read the impact they are having on young people, and can respond in a way that supports young people’s efforts to get through a difficult situation, complete a task, or take a risk to try something new. If the adult is motivated to lend the young person the support they need when they are not able to regulate their emotions and behaviours, it becomes an opportunity to help the young person learn and practise new skills. Once the adult fully understands how the young person is experiencing them in that moment, they can respond in a manner



that helps the young person use their support to try to accomplish something new or to co-regulate their emotions.

- What is my self-talk and how is it affecting my emotions?
- How is my body responding (breathless, hot, heart racing, shaking)?
- How do I want the young person to experience me in this moment?
- Am I able to provide a feeling of safety and trust?
- Am I communicating concern and acceptance or irritation and frustration?
- How is my worldview influencing me?
- How is the young person experiencing me through their worldview?

## 2. What Does This Young Person Feel, Need, Expect, or Want? How is the Young Person Experiencing Me?

The more adults know about the young person in their care, the more prepared they will be to respond in a way that reduces their level of anxiety and stress, and helps the young person regulate their emotions, learn more socially appropriate coping skills, and thrive. Knowing the young person, building attachments and connections, and establishing reciprocal and trusting relationships are a pre-requisite to effective crisis intervention.

**The more adults know about the young people in their care, the better able they will be to respond to a young person's escalating behaviour.**

- What does this young person expect from me based on their past experience?
- How is the young person's worldview affecting their reaction to the situation?
- What feelings are driving the young person's behaviour, fear, anger, frustration? What are they expressing?
- What is the young person's ability to regulate their emotions?
- How might the young person's trauma background and memories be influencing their perceptions?

When dealing with an emotionally charged situation, the question "What does this young person feel, need, expect, or want?" leads to a discovery of what will provide a sense of safety and comfort. Young People with trauma backgrounds, who have been abused and neglected, often attribute negative or hostile motives to others, especially in stressful situations.



### 3. How is the Environment Affecting the Situation?

Thinking back to Emotional/Cultural Space, Social Space, Physical Space, and Ideological Space pre-planning for crisis situations is essential. There should be clear policies and procedures that guide staff to therapeutic crisis resolution.

- What combination of setting conditions are making a potential trigger to pain based behaviour more likely?
- How is the organisational culture and climate impacting the young person's behaviour and my thinking?
- What is the atmosphere and is it contributing to the stress of the young person, group or myself?
- How is the physical environment affecting the young people, carers or staff?
- How are other young people and adults affecting the situation?
- How are the expectations and activities influencing the young persons' anxiety level?

### 4. How Do I Best Respond? How Can I Use My Relationship to Comfort the Young Person?



Exercise self-control over feelings the situation may evoke (stay in control)



Engage child and defuse pain-based behavior (provide emotional support)



Manage the environment to neutralize potential triggers (provide environmental support)



Assess impact of the response on the child and the situation (decrease level of stress)

- Is my response increasing the stress or decreasing the stress?
- Am I in control of my own emotions and behaviour?
- Am I able to co-regulate with the young person?
- Am I able to help the young person feel safe?
- Can I recognise and reinforce the young person's attempt to cope?



By providing staff with a range of prevention, intervention and management strategies, including extensive training, coaching, and opportunities to practise new skills, combined with reflective and ongoing supervision, support, and clear expectations, organisations can effectively implement the TCI System. **Adults need to provide emotional support to young people at the right time and in the right amount as well as assess their own emotional state and the impact the environmental influences are having on the situation.**



Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) Student Workbook 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Refer to Module Two pages S27 - S30.