

# CRISIS COMMUNICATION

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Presented by Sergeant Edward N. Rafailovitch  
Broward Sheriff's Office



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*“No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”*

- Theodore Roosevelt

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# GOAL

Provide participants with the knowledge and background of  
Crisis Communication

# OBJECTIVES

- Participants will:
    - Define a Crisis
    - Define Mental Illnesses
    - Define Crisis Communication
    - Define and Describe Active Listening Skills
    - Explain Crisis Communication Approaches
    - Identify with the Behavioral Influence Stairway Model
    - Common Hormones Associated with Mental Illness
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THOUGHTS?



# MENTAL ILLNESSES ASSOCIATED WITH SUICIDE

- Schizophrenia (A disorder that **affects a person's ability to think**, feel, and behave clearly)
- Bi-Polar Disorder (A disorder associated with **episodes of mood swings** ranging from depressive lows to manic highs)
- Schizoaffective Disorder (A mental health condition including **schizophrenia and mood disorder** symptoms)
- Major Depression (A brain disorder characterized by **persistently depressed mood** or loss of interest in activities, causing significant impairment in daily life)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (A disorder characterized by **failure to recover after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event**)
- Anxiety (**Feelings of worry**, anxiety, or fear that are strong enough to interfere with one's daily activities)
- Substance Abuse (overindulgence in or **dependence on an addictive substance**, especially alcohol or drugs)

# COMMON HORMONES ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

- Epinephrine - **Adrenaline**, increases heart rate and respiration to resist stress - fight or flight response.
- Norepinephrine - A neurotransmitter in the central nervous system, **increases alertness and arousal**, and speeds reaction time.
- Dopamine – Deciphering what is real and what is not and it is also **associated with the reward/pleasure** in our brains.
- Serotonin – Serotonin controls your **mood, appetite, and your sleep** cycles.
- **Endorphins - Help relieve pain and induce feelings of pleasure or euphoria.**
- Cortisol - Regulates metabolism and immune responses in the body and **plays a role in how the body responds to stress.**
- Melatonin – Your biological clock - this **hormone is responsible for** the way you feel throughout the day as far as **alertness**.
- Oxytocin – The **love hormone** (plays a role in bonding) and **strong antidote to depression**

# CHEMISTRY OF LIFE

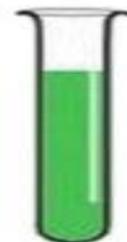
Schizophrenia



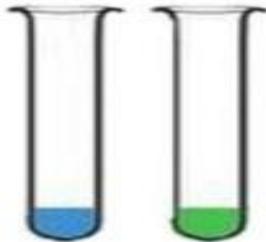
Anxiety



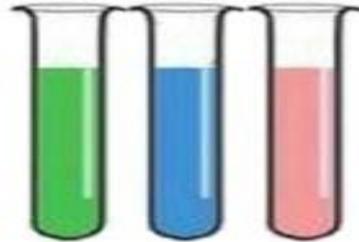
Happiness



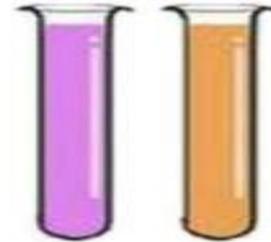
Depression



Love



Fight or Flight



-  - Dopamine
-  - Serotonin
-  - Oxytocin
-  - Norepinephrine
-  - Epinephrine

# WHAT IS A CRISIS?

- A crisis is defined as a situation that exceeds a person's ability to cope. Essentially the person's normal problem-solving mechanisms have become overwhelmed. Emotional responses are the byproduct to the crisis, which produces lower rational.

# WHAT IS CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS?

- Crisis Communications is the use of strategies and tactics of communication skills that are meant to reduce high emotion/low rational situations in individuals who are experiencing a crisis. The objective is to lower emotional responses to a rational state in order to influence an individual's behavior.

# BEHAVIORAL INFLUENCE STAIRWAY MODEL

- The BISM is the process in which the development of a relationship between a Crisis Communicator and a subject is established that results in ultimately influencing the subject to accept and act on the influence of the Crisis Communicator.
  - STAGE ONE: Active Listening
  - STAGE TWO: Empathy
  - STAGE THREE: Rapport
  - STAGE FOUR: Influence
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# WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

- Active listening is designed to allow individuals to ventilate their own concerns and to identify and discuss the person's feelings and emotions as the foundation for moving forward toward influencing the person to voluntarily listen to and act upon suggestions by a Crisis Communicator.

# CORE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- (1) Mirroring: Repeating the last few words of the subject, encouraging the subject to talk and drawing out more material for a crisis communicator to work with.
  - (S) “My wife hates me and doesn’t care about me.”
  - (CC) “Your wife doesn’t care?”
  - (S) “I lost my damn job!”
  - (CC) “You lost your job?”

# CORE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- (2) Paraphrasing: used to restate the content of what the subject said in order to ensure that the crisis communicator understands their perspective, which also demonstrates to the subject that the crisis communicator cares and is listening.
  - (CC) “Your wife hates you because you lost your job.”
  - (S) “Exactly! She doesn’t care.”

# CORE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- (3) Emotional Labeling: Labels the emotions of the subject to help bring them from emotional to rational so that problem-solving can begin.
  - (CC) “You sound angry about losing your job.”
  - (S) “Hell yeah I am angry. I did everything for them – everything! Now I don’t have any money coming in.”

*If the emotional label is wrong, that will not negatively impact the discourse. Rather, it is more important that the crisis negotiator gets it right.*

# CORE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- (4) Summarizing: The summary combines the facts obtained during the paraphrasing and the stated emotions discerned during emotional labeling and places them in a single statement that the crisis communicator relays back to the subject to demonstrate an understanding of the situation from the crisis communicator viewpoint.
  - (CC) “Just to make sure I have it right. You lost your job and now your wife hates you for losing your job and you are angry because now you don’t have money coming in?”
  - (S) “That’s right.”

# SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- **Effective Pauses:** Deliberate silence before or after a meaningful comment by a crisis negotiator – breeds anticipation before a comment and reflection after a comment.
- **Minimal Encouragers:** Verbal and non-verbal cues to the subject that the crisis communicator is being attentive to what is being said or experienced. This includes verbal sayings like “uh-huh,” “yes,” “right,” “continue,” and “okay.” Non-verbal includes nodding the head, or tilting it toward the person, leaning forward, or watching the eyes or mouth as they speak.

# SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

- Open-ended Questions: Prompts the subject to expand on his or her concerns and perspectives and encourages clarification. This allows for core active listening skills to be further employed (e.g. mirroring, paraphrasing, emotional labeling, and summarizing). Do not limit your questions to yes or no responses – the subject needs to vent!
- “I” Messages: They are used sparingly in cases where a personal disclosure in furtherance of the relationship is necessary. “I am father too, and can only imagine what it is like to lose a daughter.” When verbally attacked, “When you say I do not care, it is frustrating me because I am trying to help you; I am here because I want to be not because I have to be.”

# EMPATHY

- Empathy is the natural byproduct of effective active listening. It implies an identification and understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives.
  - The Crisis Communicator absorbs the tension from the subject.
  - The Crisis Communicator is does not always have to be right, but the attempt to be right is key.

Empathy requires proper tone, which indicates attitude and genuineness through inflection and pitch; it expresses emotion, demeanor, and projected sincerity.

Empathy seeks to understand and then be understood, which building into rapport.

# RAPPORT

- Rapport is trust and mutual affinity.
  - Once empathy is established, rapport develops and the subject is in a better position to listen to what the Crisis Communicator has to say.
    - Themes are built (explain, justify, mitigate)
    - Defensive mechanisms explored (rationalization)
    - Minimizations occur (downplays negative behavior by the subject)
    - Blending concepts (reduce real or perceived differences – find common ground)
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# INFLUENCING

- Influence is the act or power of producing an effect without apparent force or direct authority.
  - Once the relationship has flourished where the subject is ready to accept suggestions from the Crisis Communicator, the CC has earned the right to suggest a course of action to the subject through collaborative problem-solving.
  - Both the subject and Crisis Communicator work together to identify solutions and alternatives that are suitable to both.
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# BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- Behavior change occurs only if all four stages have been completed and no stage has been skipped to try to solve the crisis prematurely. A positive relationship is necessary for behavior change to occur and the implementation of active listening, empathy, rapport, and influence are the tactics necessary to help make this happen.

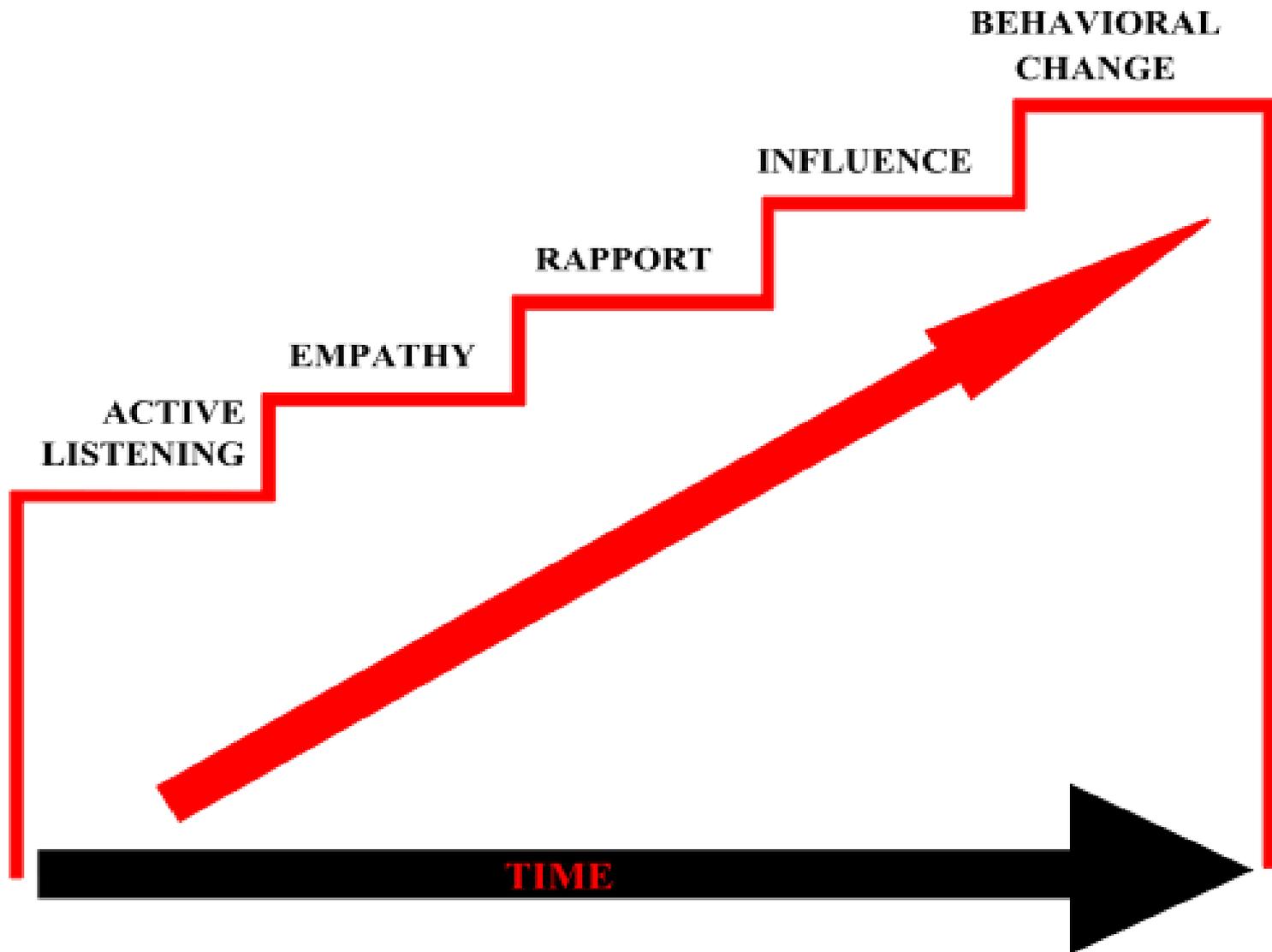


Fig. 2. Behavioral change stairway.