CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN YOUTH WORK

Dear reader,

This booklet has been created as a learning outcome from the Online training course "Crisis management in youth work" that happened in December 2020. We had interactive workshops with various guests and experts, trainers and facilitators, discussing different concepts and activities.

We have concluded that there is a need to create a booklet which will capture some of the learning and experience of the organizations dealing with crisis situation.

We have included several articles in this booklet:

- Introduction of major crisis management models

- Adaptation of one crisis management model in context of the reality in youth work

- Two articles on our own experience of crisis management during youth activities (youth exchange and volunteering service)

- Mindfulness in crisis management

This booklet should not be seen as the final product, but as a starting point for further research, discussions and debates, compilation of resources such as guides and mindmaps, design of workshops and activities that will strengthen the capacities of the youth organizations. In case you have suggestions of something that should be included in future publications, we are very happy to hear those ideas on the email provided below.

We hope that this booklet will bring added value to your learning and dealing with crisis situations in the future.
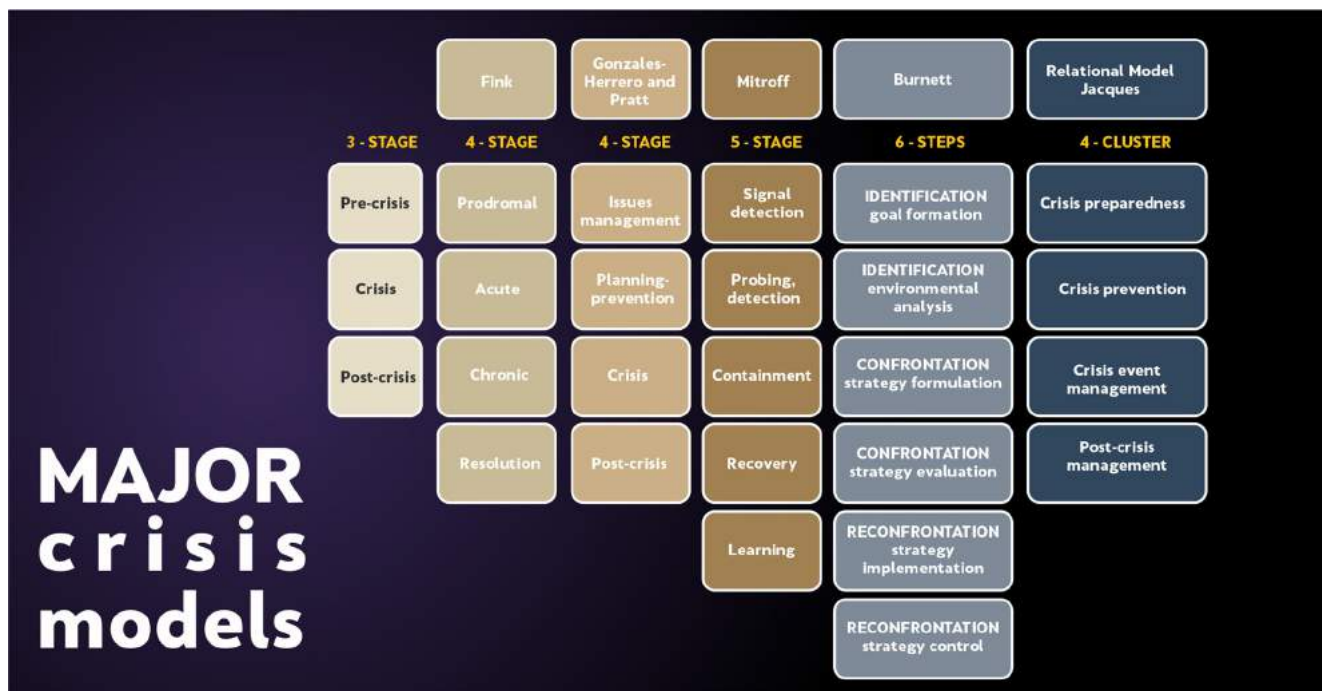
Kind regards,

Darko Mitevski
President
NaturKultur e.V.
darkomitevski@naturkultur.eu

NATURKULTUR E.V.

MAJOR crisis models

	Fink	Gonzales-Herrero and Pratt	Mitroff	Burnett	Relational Model Jacques
3 - STAGE	4 - STAGE	4 - STAGE	5 - STAGE	6 - STEPS	4 - CLUSTER
Pre-crisis	Prodromal	Issues management	Signal detection	IDENTIFICATION goal formation	Crisis preparedness
Crisis	Acute	Planning-prevention	Probing, detection	IDENTIFICATION environmental analysis	Crisis prevention
Post-crisis	Chronic	Crisis	Containment	CONFRONTATION strategy formulation	Crisis event management
	Resolution	Post-crisis	Recovery	CONFRONTATION strategy evaluation	Post-crisis management
			Learning	RECONFRONTATION strategy implementation	
				RECONFRONTATION strategy control	

Introduction

Some crises we cannot predict. They happen suddenly and unexpected.

Some crises are predictable. We have a feeling that something will happen, we might ignore it for a while, but we are expecting it when it comes. For example, you can see that your incomes are decreasing, while your costs remain the same, and the future doesn't look too optimistic. Although on short-term you can manage this, what kind of implication will it have long-term?

Regardless of if it is a short-term or long-term crisis, predictable or unpredictable, crises always leave consequences on our organizations, the team, the resources, or our own wellbeing. Sometimes the consequences are minor – having some stress and sleepless nights, sometimes the consequences are more severe – resulting in burnout with us or our coworkers, people leaving the organization, financial damages or even closure of the organizations, temporarily or permanently.

As it is very difficult to predict when a crisis will come and in which shape or form, it's important that we learn and prepare ourselves and our organizations for any kind of crisis, and we have this as a resource, something to go to when the time comes.

Why did I choose this tool?

There are many crisis management models out there with different characteristics, following different frameworks, being used by a variety of organizations in different situations. It is important to have an overview of the different models, so we can easily maneuver in the vast knowledge and find what suits our team and organization the most.

This article will make an overview and summary of few different models - from Fink, Jaques and Luecke and highlight the most important things – the framework of these models. We will also provide access to the literature, in case you want to get the book and start working on your team's crisis management approaches.

Major crisis models

According to different crisis models, there are 3 main stages of each crisis – Pre-crisis situation, crisis management and post-crisis situation. If we observe the major crisis management models that are broadly being used today, we will see that although they have different stages, they focus on different actions and they are developed for different kind of situations, they all have pretty similar frameworks.

Fink crisis management model

In his book, "Crisis Management - Planning for the Inevitable", the author Steven Fink sees four different phases in a crisis:

<div align="center">

Predormal crisis stage

Acute Crisis stage

Chronic crisis stage

Crisis resolution stage

</div>

In this article, we will briefly review 3 different models and check what are their highlights – what kind of challenges are there, which steps are there, what can we do to understand the big picture, and which model resonates the most with us, so each Individual/organization will be able to adjust them to their own reality and hopefully approach the next crisis situation much more prepared.
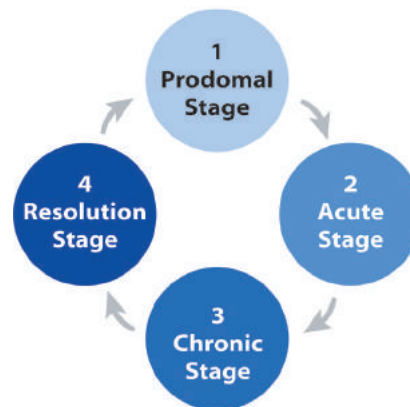

Fink's Crisis Model

Fink describes the **Predormal stage** as the **warning stage**, if the warning can be seen at all. Sometimes even that the signs are there, we miss seeing the crisis, until there is a turning point and it slips to an acute phase already. Sometimes the signs are obvious and there, but we procrastinate too long or take no action. The crisis is much easier to manage when it is in the warning stage before it becomes an acute problem.

The **Acute stage** is the point of no return. Some damage has been done and what happens from this point on depends only on how we react. The key in this stage is to control as much as it is possible, some organizations see it as a "damage control" phase, limiting and mitigating as much as possible. The key factors in this stage are speed and intensity which depend on the type of the crisis and the severity of the outcomes.

The **Chronic stage** is sometimes called – the clean-up phase. It is the period of self-reflection and self-evaluation, analysis of the situation and what went wrong, but also of healing and recovery. When the

right approach and actions are taken, this might become the stage of turn around, of success that will drive the development of the organization, but also it might linger indefinitely without an effective plan in place.

The last phase is the Resolution phase, where the patient becomes healthy again. As crisis are cyclical processes and they never come as one crisis at a time, it is of the utmost importance to identify the real crisis and to address the core of the issue. In the Resolution phase, although things look good, they are quite fragile and reinforcing the structures and rebuilt are needed for the stability to be permanent.

The Fink model is very comprehensive, apart from the different stages. In his book he is talking about crisis forecasting or creating crisis management plans and shares concrete examples from real companies and how they reacted, allowing readers to imagine what the impact was and how they can apply those tools in their own organizations.

Harvard Business School approach (Luecke)

In their book Crisis management, Harvard Business School Press (2004), the author Luecke and Advisor Barton are taking a similar approach of having several stages of the crisis.

They start with **anticipation** of **what could go wrong** – where they address 3 different levels – which are the sources of potential crisis, identifying potential crisis and prioritizing what is the importance of each of the crisis for the team or organization. **Avoiding the avoidable** is where they provide insight on the preventing different crisis, in case that we can by preparing a systematic program for crisis avoidance, installing "red lights" which will timely inform us for an approaching crisis, gearing up with different kind of insurances that might be helpful to mitigate or offset parts of the crisis. In the pre-crisis phases they are also talking about **contingency planning** – preparing today for tomorrow – who will be in the planning team, how and when will you assess the problem, who and when will develop the plan, how will you test that plan and who will keep the created plans up to date.

In terms of **Crisis recognition**, they stress the importance of having different warning signals that will be placed to alert us of an incoming crisis. However, they also stress that even though many organizations have created this kind of early alert systems, some of them are still missing proving the right information early. They also talk about potential solutions for different kind of crises.

Containment is the phase where it is the time to prevent the bad situation from getting worse, where they are sharing several rules from their point of view:

1. Act quickly and decisively
2. Put people first
3. Be on the scene(ground)
4. Communicate liberally

In the last 3 chapters, they are focusing on recovery, ownership of the situation and learning from the experience.

The recovery should start with moving quickly to the goal and putting people first. The people are the asset of each organization and their wellbeing is a priority in all organizations. As someone who is managing the crisis, the authors recommend being as close to the scene as possible to be able to receive all information, get a feel of what is going on, and be able to process the severity of the situation and think of potential solutions. Communication is one of the key aspects not only among the team, but also with the other stakeholders and the general public. Mastering the media will help the organizations to create their own story, their own narrative which will be supporting the recovery and rebuilding phases.

Learning from the experience is the last phase where the end of the crisis should be marked and all of the learning should be harvested. Recording the information of what happened, what was the impact and what kind of response we used, will help in some future situations when different crisis will appear.

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Relational crisis management model (Jacques)
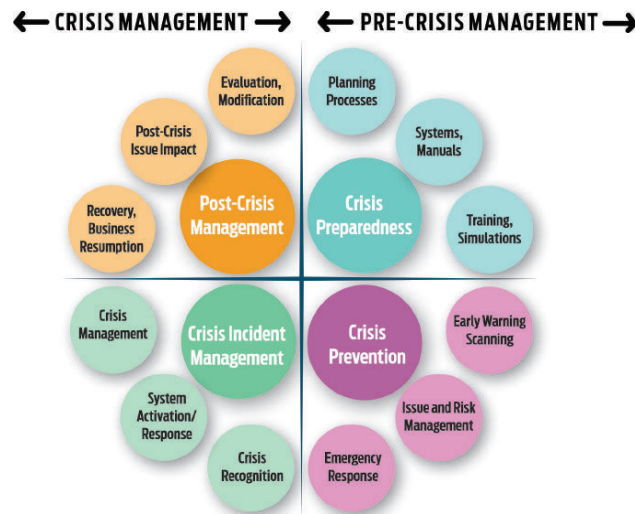
If we are talking about how to prepare our organizations for the next crisis and how to build a knowledge base and resilience in our team, we can follow one of the practical models that describe several areas of where we can develop processes in our organizations.

This model presents 4 different areas of handling one crisis:

1. Crisis preparedness
2. Crisis prevention
3. Crisis Incident management
4. Post-Crisis management

Crisis preparedness

Each organization should prepare in some way about crisis situations, regardless of if it is a short or long-term crisis, ones that happen suddenly or can be predicted, or it happens to one or more people in your team. There are 3 different approaches that our organization can prepare for a crisis:

Planning and processes
Systems and manuals
Trainings and simulations

These actions should be further developed by the youth organizations. Having a plan and instruction manual on what to do when the crisis happens in our organization, for example – serious injury or major conflict between participants. There should be a clear system of how things will be addressed – decision-making structure, who is responsible for what,

who needs to be informed and so on. To get familiar with stressful situations, we can design trainings and simulations and do them with our team. Therefore, we prepare the best that we can for the situation.

Crisis prevention

It is not enough to just be prepared on how to react in certain situations. We might have all the knowledge and the best team in the world, but the mastery is in preventing the crisis from approaching us is to be able to see it long before it arrives.

Early warning scanning
Issue and risk management
Emergency response

When we first see the signs, we immediately need to start developing plans, identify the risks and potential impact, and start managing those risks, otherwise the crisis impact might broaden. Having prepared emergency responses and trained teams who know what to do might determine the outcome of the crisis, how long it will last and what kind of resources it would take to manage it.

Crisis incident management

Once the crisis meets us, and there is nothing that we can do to avoid or prevent it, we should address it as soon as possible. Procrastination and fear will only block the response, therefore it is preferable to brainstorm calmly with your team and make decisions, but to act decisively.

Crisis recognition
Crisis management
Systems activation / Response

Damage control and mitigation are some of the things that we can focus on, adjusting the activities according to the situation. If we have projects that need to be cancelled, we better do it immediately and limit the financial damage. After the actions begin, it would be beneficial if there are systems in place that we can activate, that will systematically address the issues. Each organization should develop these kinds of systems to limit the significant impact on the organization and people.

Post-crisis management

We have addressed the crisis, limited the damage, mitigated some of the financial impact for later and now the dust is settling. We can measure the damage in real terms, we are able to see the prospects for the future and the negative impact on our organization. What are the crucial steps we can take?

Post-crisis issue impact
Recovery, activities resumption
Evaluation and modification

It is crucial to focus on the "light at the end of the tunnel" or on a "Marshall plan for rebuild. Usually the crisis is making not only organizational impact in terms of finances and decreased activities, but it is making a significant impact on the people working for your organization. Having something to look for, such as future goals or activities that they will be passionate about, is one of the key goals in the recovery period. If you don't have such goals, the attitude might slide into lethargy and fear. Therefore, resumption of activities and rebuild/recovery processes are key to increase the level of the positive spirit in the organization. These plans can be modified and evaluated periodically to fine-tune the direction where we are all going, taking into consideration the new developments.

How does this apply to being a trainer?
Trainers and youth workers are people who on daily basis work with young people and come into challenging situations. Conflicts or mental health issues, injuries or budget cuts, global pandemic or mili-

tary coup are just a few crisis situations that have happened on youth-related projects and activities. Knowing different kind of models will enable the trainers and youth workers to recognize the crisis and more adequately respond to it so that the negative impact will be minimized.

Reflection questions

You can do these reflections individually or in a team setting:

Think of the 3 most common crisis situations in your organization/work. What are they? How often do they happen? Why are they so critical?
What can you do to prevent them?
What can you do to predict them?
What can you do to prepare better? What kind of systems do you need?
Why do you need a recovery plan after a crisis?

Exercises

You can do these reflections individually or in a team setting:

Brainstorm on what kind of systems do you want to develop in your organization or team?

What kind of early warning signs can you design and put to keep you alert?

What kind of training or simulation do you need? Could you design it and deliver it yourself?

List 5 things on how could have you managed the last crisis situation better

What were the implications for your organization? What can you do to avoid them?

References:

Fink, Stephen (2002), Crisis management, Universal Publishers

Luecke, Richard(2002), Crisis management, Harvard Business Press

Jaques, Tony (2007), Issue management and crisis management: An integrated, non-linear, relational construct, www.researchgate.net/publication/222825265_Issue_management_and_crisis_management_An_integrated_non-linear_relational_construct

Crisis management in Youth work
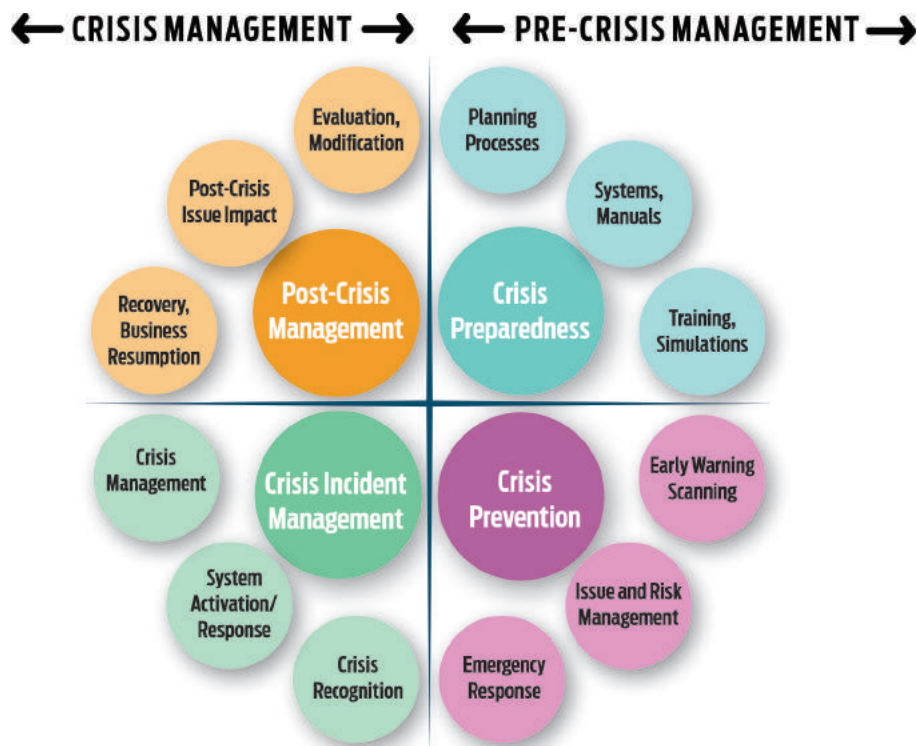
Introduction

Youth work is a relatively new profession. In its beginnings, it has been done mainly by the church or other religious organizations who took care of the young people or offered different kind of educational or social activities. In recent years, youth work in some parts of Europe has been done by state or city run organizations like youth houses and youth centers, which offer daily open-door services or organize group activities for the young people. In some other countries, the youth work is being done more informally by non-governmental organizations or youth associations who offer different kind of targeted activities for the young people from social character or educational activities such as free time activities during summer, gaining education or practical experience, learning about specific issues in our societies such as environment or human rights activism.

All of these organizations, having been relatively new structures which are trying to find their shape and form in the larger system that is constantly changing, many have not been preparing for different kind of crisis situations that can potentially approach them. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that the youth field was not prepared for such a crisis from this magnitude. Of course, no one was. The pandemic came as a tsunami wave which exposed all of the downsides in the professions. However, in many other organizations and areas such as manufacturing or education, the systems, organizations or companies were able to regroup and reorganize and adapt their activities, making the damages and the effects of the crisis more manageable, the future steps more predictable. In the youth field, especially on international level, the small and medium organizations who offer youth services were caught unprepared, not being able to reorganize and manage their activities or the rules of the donors were set in a way that prevents them to do their work. In the field there are no big systems such as unions, different kind of associations, minimum quality standards, or manuals what to do in crisis situations, guides and trainings of what to do or how to prevent crises situations, that would help these youth organizations to advocate for their rights or get prepared for crisis situations.

Why did I choose this tool?

This article will follow the framework of one crisis model that and will offer some insights of how organizations that are active in youth work can develop their own systems that will help them prevent, predict, manage or deal with the recovery in crises situations. This model is used as a framework, and we will share some ideas of what can it be done in order to customize it to our own reality, coming from our own experiences or the experiences that we have seen in the field by other organizations.

These are insights that should be seen as an road map of how organizations could prepare for potential crisis situations. However, a much more detailed and dedicated work is needed by different actors and authorities, to create reliable systems and practices that will help the youth organizations manage their activities in different kind of crises situations.

Relational crisis management model (Jacques) adapted to youth work reality

If we are talking about how to prepare our youth organizations for the next crisis, how to build knowledge base and resilience in our team, we can follow one of the practical models that describes several areas of where we can develop processes in our organizations.

This model presents 4 different areas of handling one crisis:

1. Crisis preparedness
2. Crisis prevention
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Crisis preparedness

Each organization should prepare in some way about crisis situations, regardless if it is a short or long term crisis, ones that happen suddenly or can be predicted, or it happens to one or more people in your team. There are 3 different approaches that our organization could prepare for a crisis:

Planning and processes

Each organization can identify or estimate where the next potential crisis can come from, looking from the past experiences. Is it challenges with participants on your youth projects, or is it financial issues due to the unpredictable donors' relations? Each organization has their own weak spots and sometimes it helps to predict and prepare for something that might happen in the future.

Some crises are unpredictable. No one could predict the Covid-19 Pandemic on such scale and the impact that it had. But we can predict some other things – for example a key employee leaving the organization, significant financial damages or conflicts and happening at the workplace.

Therefore, it is really important that each organization identifies which are the most common/impact-

ful crisis situations that might happen, what kind of processes can be developed for damage control or addressing the issue, how can the crisis be managed or the risks mitigated. As an example of few plans:

- The organization can develop financial crisis plan, with finances that are there for crisis purposes only. This kind of plan would give you the needed financial resources in time of urgent need.

- Redesigned team hierarchy, where in terms of crisis the teams are reinforced and supported where is needed.

- Other resources availability – cars or technology, decision making power, information sharing are only few resources that we need to "redirect" to make the handling of the crisis more effective.

- Redesigned working hours of the team adapted to the situation – planning for recuperation time after the crisis, planning of shortened working hours when facing with extreme stress, rotation of employees who are dealing with the situation.

Systems and manuals

Some organizations develop systems and manuals that will guide the employees into what to do when a crisis happens. The best examples are the fire escape plans and behaviors. In case of fire in your building, everyone should remain calm and follow the maps to the exits of the building. They are there on a visible place, concretely describing what to do in the situation when fire happens, instructing the people what to do, so there is no panic, stress and rushed decisions.

This kind of manuals and systems can be developed in your organization too: who is responsible for decision making in case you have a problem on some project? What happens if one of the participants is injured, who do you need to call and inform about the situation? Thinking the answers before the crisis situation happens will prevent fast and rushed decisions, potential mistakes and a lot of stress and potential damage in your organization.

Trainings and simulations

You can develop tailor-made trainings for your team so they can practice how to react in certain crisis situations. For example: which steps could be made or which tools are available to your colleagues, in case a crisis approaches them, or how to activate or utilize the crisis systems. These crises situations are specific to each organization due to the work that they do.

Even if it is not possible to create a specific step-by-step training for particular crisis, improvising with simulations could help your colleagues develop understanding of the crisis situation, brainstorm of actions that you can take and decrease the fear and stress of your team next time when such situation happens, help them feel more comfortable in such situations in the future.

Crisis prevention

Early warning scanning

Each organization should put their own "red lights" on different places, in order to give them early warning signs that a crisis is potentially coming. Some-times they can be unpredictable, but if we are looking at the right direction, we might notice early warning signs that might get our attention and we might be more alert and careful with the decision that we make.

For example: in our organization we are tracking several segments where risks might appear:

1. Running costs of the activities – we are tracking the costs of each of the projects on a monthly basis, and if there is any significant increase or decrease of the costs of that project, it will give us early warning sign to address the situation much earlier than at a time when it will be too late.

2. Well being of our team members – we are regularly checking in with our team about their wellness and wellbeing. As we are a small organization and people are our greatest resource, and someone being incapacitated due to burn-out or other challenges will seriously hinder our capacity, we are regularly checking with our people and giving them regular vacations and extended weekends, so they can take care of their well being.

3. Well being of the young people – we are looking at, paying attention and assessing the wellbeing of the young people we work with. We are not psychologist or doctors, but we are paying attention and openly talking about variety of issues with the young people, that gives us some "heads up" to address the challenges at an earlier stage.

4. External factors – lack of available funding, change of funding rules, variety of permits are just few external factors that can impact our organization. We are openly discussing and sharing news in our organization, talking about different development and how they might impact our future or core work.

Each organization should make their own "early warning signs" and consider what would they do if the situation turns for the worst.

Issue and risk management

In order to manage the risks, every organization or a team has to identify and describe the issues and potential risks that they are having in their work, so they can understand them better and develop strategies and approaches on how to address them.

For example:

- Working with young people is never easy, they are variety of challenges that appear – from physical injuries of falling from a tree or setting themselves on fire, to psychological issues when they have challenges with their mental health during a youth exchange, or challenges that they have in their families or school.

- Sudden decrease of the funding – many organizations have only one source of funding of their activities, which in case that something happens with it, brings the whole organization in risk and crisis.

- Some of the colleagues leave the organization and a gap is created that needs to be filled in order to keep the things running on the proper level.

- Identifying and talking with your colleagues about the potential risks and creating ways how to address them is the appropriate way to manage them.

Emergency response

Each organization should come out with emergency responses for the main crisis situations that might appear on their activities. For example:

One of the volunteers has contracted Covid-19. What would be your emergency response that you go to, without having to brainstorm in the middle of the situation?

For example:

- Assign a person that will be supporting the volunteer, making the tests and getting in touch with the doctors, getting necessary information, medicaments etc.

- Another person is going to talk with the other volunteers who live in the same flat, to self-iso-late and do precaution, testing and checking if they have symptoms.

- Assigning a person that is going to supply the apartment with food and other necessities.

- Informing the authorities and the donors about the situation.

This is just a short example of the approach that each organization should have. Each team should develop a custom made responses for their crisis situations.

Crisis incident management

Crisis recognition

Once the crisis situation has started and it is affecting your team or organization, it must be identified to what extend is the scope of the crisis. What and who will be affected and to which extend, information coming from the early warning signs. It is crucial to open the communication channels so you make sure that you receive all relevant information in terms of the crisis, to look where is needed in order to understand the particular impact of the crisis. Being there on the spot to see and hear the information on first hand is probably the best way to get to know what is going on. Sometimes one crisis causes another, a bigger one. If the financial damages are bad on one big project, you can expect that the challenging financial situation will spillover on other areas, the employees will be fearful for their earnings, the financial sustainability of the whole organization could be impacted, the composition of the team with people potentially leaving due to the insecurity and unpredictability, so it is important to keep short and long term perspective of the impacts of the crisis.

All of this would enable the organization to have the necessary information and understanding of the crisis, which is crucial in managing it on the spot.

Crisis management

Composing a team that will address the crisis situation, making sure that there is clear understanding

of the role of each member, that there is clear communication channel that is going in both directions and that the delegation of activities and responsibilities is as clear as possible.

Support for each other in the team, meaning that during crisis everyone is overwhelmed and feeling it in different ways. Some on their physical health, some on their mental or emotional health. Being there for each other, checking in on each other is one of the most important things in crisis management.

Timely decisions and keeping records. In crisis, it is always difficult to decide what is right and what is wrong. Lack of information, things moving fast are recipe for trouble. Making timely decisions and not getting stuck in procrastination and keeping records of the decisions and how they were made, is important in crisis management.

Safety first – prioritization of safety before all other goals is obvious in crisis situations.

Timely allocated finances and resources – it would be great if you can manage the crisis with a budget and resources that will be ready and at your disposal (crisis reserves). If you need to start looking or shifting budgets for funding or looking for other recourses when the crisis is in a full blown mode, it will make it much more difficult to address it and the damages would be much more severe.

Systems activation / Response

If you have created systems that can be activated, such as emergency responses or incident management protocols, now it is the time to activate them in order to limit the damage the control the situation, mitigate the crisis or address it.

Those systems should be activated when the situations become unbearable in the team or emergency response when one of the young people or participants is injured during our activities. In these situations, everyone should know their role and what to do, what is expected from them and how their tasks are to be performed.

Another system is the fire in the building emergency response. Everyone needs to remain calm, concrete people are directing the groups towards the exists, calm but fast departure of the building, covering the mouth and lowering the head below the smoke, activation of the sound alarm to inform everyone is a good example of activation of the systems in crisis situation.

Post crisis management

Post crisis issue impact assessment

The crisis is finished and the dust is settling. It is time to assess the damages that were made from various point of view – damages to the psychological and physical wellbeing of your team, financial damages to the projects or organization, impact that it had on the young people or their activities, impact that it had on the stability of the organization and the long terms plans. These are all very serious impacts that need to be assessed and a proper recovery plan should be developed in the organization.

For example: if some of the funding was lost due to the situation, how can we replace that funding? Many people had impacts on their well being, how can we built resilience? Should we downsize the activities or change and adapt? Should we get new team members to support the rebuilt?

Recovery, activities resumption

After assessing the damages that were created during the crisis, as soon as possible the focus should shift on the recovery. Recovery processes could last very long and the team needs something to look forward to, in order to overcome the situation and heal the wounds. Setting a timely, realistic and mindful recovery plan is one of the main goals of how to get out of the crisis even stronger than before. It is crucial to take the learning from the situation and to grow as people and organization, to avoid repeating the same mistakes again, therefore the needed time and resources should be allocated and the whole team should take part in the creation of the recovery plan and resuming the activities in case that there was interruption.

Developing a new inspiring project, creating an organizational culture that will strengthen the

team spirit, taking time for team building and re-setting of the goals, applying for new funding can be just some of the recovery activities that the organizations can do, something that the whole team could look forward to and be excited.

Evaluation and modification

We cannot foresee the systems to be fully effective, just from hypothetically assuming what might happen during a crisis situation and contemplating how we should react. Getting the proper responses, having well trained and resilient team, having proper systems in place, might take years, for some organizations even decades to develop (depending on how deep and complex are the organizations). Therefore, it is crucial, after everything settles down, and things return to the new "normal", to sit down with the team and evaluate how things went, where are the challenges and where could the improvements be. Only in this way you can prepare even better for the next crisis of a similar type.

The modifications should be concrete and practical, experience based activities. Keep the things that were working well, try to finetune or completely change the things that didn't work. Don't forget to put SMART goals so you will be able to compete, you should avoid doing things based on assumption.

How does this apply to being a trainer or youth worker

Trainers and youth workers are people that need crisis management skills in order to timely manage, address or mitigate crisis that happen in their projects, in their team or organizations. Since they are doing their job in real time, they need to understand the situation and act accordingly right away. This will not only increase their capacity and address properly the situation, but it will decrease potential damages, it would protect their team and organization and it will keep the situation as stable as possible.

Reflection questions

Do you feel prepared for the next crisis situation in your organization? If not, what is missing?

What kind of crisis situation would that be?

Do you have any systems in place to handle the situation?

Which of the 4 stages is the most relevant one for you?

How can you develop capacity within your team/organization to handle crisis situations?

Exercises

Sit down with your team and talk about the different stages of the crisis management models (you can pick another one if this one is not suitable for you).

Talk about what kind of systems and plans you already have in place.

Identify what is missing and what would you like to do (guides, trainings, etc)

List the importance of the variety of crisis situations with your team and also come out with solutions (plans) how to address those situations.

Design training or educational activity that will enable your teammates to react appropriately.

References

Jaques, Tony (2007), Issue management and crisis management: An integrated, non-linear, relational construct, www.researchgate.net/publication/222825265_Issue_management_and_crisis_management_An_integrated_non-linear_relational_construct

Crisis Management on Erasmus+ Projects

Introduction

While organizing Erasmus+ projects, one of our main concerns as a project manager, trainer, youth worker, is to ensure that the main activity of the project goes as planned, that participants have a safe and enjoyable experience, and that the planned results are achieved. Even though we prepare ourselves and think about what can go wrong, we can never fully prepare for everything that can happen. A participant taking a fire extinguisher and spraying it on other people to make a party better, resulting in people suffocating and a hotel threatening to kick the whole group out. One group of participants was denied entry to your country and the budget is cut by 20%. There is a conflict inside your team and the working atmosphere is bad. Some of your team members got Covid-19 a few days before the main activity and you have to find a substitute… These are just some examples of what can go wrong on Erasmus+ projects and there are many more crisis situations like these where it is necessary to act fast and avoid creating mistakes that can end up being very expensive.

No matter how prepared and experienced youth workers are, they all, sooner or later, encounter a crisis situation in their work. When we take into consideration that often projects are organized by young people who are new in the field, without having a lot of experience in crisis situations and without a developed network that can support them, it is not a surprise that they are not sure how to deal with these situations. This can affect negatively both the organizers of the activity and the participants. In this chapter we are going to focus more on the crisis in Erasmus+ projects and what can be done to prevent them or to address them when they happen.

Five phases of crisis management on Erasmus+ Projects

When talking about crisis management, we often mention 4 or 5 main phases that happen and that we need to be aware of. It is the same case when we are talking about crisis situations on Erasmus+ projects. These phases are *prevention - preparedness – response – recovery – mitigation*.

Five phases of emergency management[1]

The first phase in crisis management is Prevention. In an Erasmus+ project, we need to assess what the potential crisis situations that could happen are and how we can avoid them. Make a list of threats that could end with a crisis, a session or visit you plan to do, profiles of the participants, or anything that is specific for your project. An example is the travel of participants: they could be denied boarding, they could miss the plane or train, they could get physically injured during the trip, or something else could happen. These are just some examples for one type of crisis that can happen. You should brainstorm with your team and partners and list all the situations that come to mind. Think about what is the likelihood of each situation happening, how severe the consequences would be, and how it would impact the participants, you, and the whole project. Don't forget that the crisis situation can happen at any moment during the project, not just during the youth exchange or training course inside the project. Think also about what you would do in these situations. It is always better to prevent the crisis than to try to fix it, when possible.

However, not all crisis situations can be prevented. Therefore, it is important not just to think about what we can do to prevent the crisis, but also to think about how we can prepare ourselves for one. This brings us to the second phase of crisis management which is Preparedness. What we do in a crisis situation is important, but equally important is what we do before the crisis happens. Discussing with your team and creating a crisis management plan, educating all team members and having trainings about crisis management can make a real difference when the crisis happens. It is rather unlikely that you will deal with a crisis on Erasmus+ projects by yourself. Therefore, it is important that the whole team is trained and prepared to react properly when a crisis situation happens. Everyone in the team should be aware of the situation and everyone can help with the management of the crisis.

The first two phases of the crisis management are focused on pre-crisis. The third one, Response, is when you actually respond to the crisis situation that happens on your project. Under Response, we are counting all actions done immediately be-

[1] Diagram taken from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (https://www.fema.gov/)

fore, during and immediately after a crisis situation. Response is often considered the most important part of crisis management, but the previous two phases are also affecting how you are going to react when the crisis happens. There are many different approaches, and different project managers and youth workers prioritize different actions. From the research carried out whilst writing and organizing the "Crisis Management in Youth Work" project, and also from our own experience with crisis situations that happened on our projects, we have created our own list of things and actions that should be done during all crisis situations on Erasmus+ projects. The list is shared and explained later in this chapter.

The last two phases of crisis management are part of the post-crisis, what we do after the crisis situation has finished, how we can learn from the crisis situation that happened and improve preparation for the future crisis situations. The fourth phase of crisis management is Recovery. Recovery starts sometimes immediately after the crisis situation has finished, while in some cases it comes a bit later. The goal of Recovery is to repair any damage that the crisis caused to your Erasmus+ project and to bring back normality to your project or the activity you are organising. During this phase, you should also fulfil any commitments you gave to the participants or partners during the crisis situation.

What to do during crisis situations

In the next part of this chapter, we wanted to share important steps that you need to take when a crisis happens. Be aware that every crisis situation is specific and there is no one ultimate list that covers all actions and that can be used in all situations. Here we are sharing the list that we are personally using and making sure that all steps are covered during a crisis situation.

Stay calm. The first important thing is to stay calm, even if you are not feeling like that on the inside. If you are stressed and showing to others that the crisis situation is affecting you, others will be more stressed too. If you are working as a project manager, you should especially take this into consideration. Your team, colleagues and participants are going to be looking to you for guidance and moral

The fifth phase of crisis management is Mitigation. Mitigation is the action of reducing the severity, seriousness or painfulness of something. In Erasmus+ projects, during this phase we are determining how and why the crisis situation happened, how we handled the situation, what we have learned from it and how we can implement lessons learned inside our crisis management plan. During the Mitigation phase, we are considering the measures that could prevent the crisis situation, reduce the chance of the crisis situation happening, or reduce the damage that an unavoidable crisis situation will have on our project. As you can notice, the Mitigation phase is also connected to the first phase of crisis management, Prevention. Therefore, the crisis management phases are shaped in a form of a circle, after the fifth phase of crisis management is finished, the first phase starts again, you take the experience and knowledge gained during the crisis situation and you use it to avoid or reduce future crisis situations, as well as to prepare better for them. It is never possible to completely avoid crisis situations in Erasmus+ projects, what we can do is to prepare ourselves and our team for the crisis, react properly when the crisis happens and learn from that crisis for the future situation that could happen. We hope that this chapter and the whole booklet will help you with that.

support. Lead by example. If your team sees that you are concerned, focused, yet calm and collected, they will mimic your approach. Panic does nobody any good, and only complicates already challenging situations. If you show that you are nervous, so will your team. If you stay calm, each person will do their part to solve the dilemma. It is also important to stay optimistic in crisis situations. If you are optimistic that you will solve the crisis situation, your team will feel motivated to work hard at resolving the crisis affecting your project. Don't give anyone false hope, but optimism is contagious, and motivates your team.

Safety first. The priority is always to help the person that is in danger or injured. We always have several first aid kits inside the venue and at least

1 or 2 people in the team who know how to give first aid. This again brings us to the second phase of crisis management and shows the importance of being prepared for the crisis situation. If the hospital is far, you should also ensure that you always have a car available and that you can take the person to the hospital if need be.

Decision making and team handling. As mentioned before, you shouldn't deal with the crisis situation alone. Therefore, it is important to inform your team about the crisis situation, agree on how you will deal with the whole situation as a team, and what the responsibilities of each team member are. Informing your team about the crisis and brainstorming together will result in more ideas and potentially a better response to the crisis. If, along with your team, you are not sure what to do, you can contact other colleagues and partners and ask for their suggestions: maybe they have experienced a similar situation and/or they will be able to give you useful advice. If there is a need for it, you should also inform local authorities about the situation and ask them what you should do according to the rules of the country where you are organizing the youth exchange or the training course.

Transparency. Something you should never forget is to inform other participants about the situation that happened. They will anyway hear about it and form their own opinion, so it is always better that you are the one from whom they hear about the crisis and what is being done. You should decide how many details you will share with them and if there is something that is better to keep for yourself. You should calm down the participants and focus on the positive things in the whole situation. Explain to them that you are doing everything you can to solve the situation and that everything will be ok. At this moment, you cannot prevent a crisis situation, but you can stop it from spreading further. Take control of the situation and don't allow the crisis to affect your project more than it has to.

Finally, it is important to continue with your project or the activity if the crisis happens during the youth exchange or a training course. If you cannot be there and lead the sessions yourself, ask somebody from your team to take over while you deal with the crisis situation, communicating with partners, authorities, going to the hospital or anything else that is necessary to be done. It is important that the programme continues, it's better to have participants focused on workshops, than just for them to think about what happened.

1. Stay calm

2. Help to the person that is in danger or injured

3. Coordination with your team

4. Coordination with the partners

5. Inforaming the rest of the participamts

6. Continue with the activity

Response to crisis situations on Erasmus+ Projects

These are the steps that we are following in the crisis situation, think about them as the starting point and develop it further with your team and according to the situation that happens. Crisis management is an important part of planning and organizing every Erasmus+ project and it is a continuous process that should never be ignored or forgotten. We hope that this booklet will help you prevent some and respond appropriately to other crisis situations that you will face during your Erasmus+ projects.

Questions for the reflection:

- How do you usually react when a crisis situation happens to you or someone you know? Is there a difference in your reactions in your personal and professional life?

- Think about certain crisis situations that happened to you in the past. What would you do differently, after reading this article?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your team members, how can each of them contribute to crisis situations?

- What can you do personally to prepare for future crisis situations?

Exercise:

For the exercise, take an already existing project that you plan to organize, or if you still don't have a project, think about the project or event that you would like to organize. Meet with the rest of your team and together try to create a list of all threats and the potential crisis situations that could happen. Think how, as a team, you would approach each of those situations. Since not all crisis situations can be anticipated, create your own crisis management plan, think about how your team will approach the next crisis situation, who would be responsible for what and what are the steps you would take. Make your own list of steps you need to take in future crisis situations. As the starting point, you can use the steps we previously described, but adjust them to your needs, opinions, and ideas from your team. Create a document with your own crisis management plan and steps and make it available to the whole team so that it can be easily accessed by all team members when there will be a need for it.

How did we deal with the Covid Crisis within our ESC projects?

In short, the Covid-19 pandemic took us by surprise. We were not imagining having to take decisions on whether to evacuate volunteers staying abroad, we were not ready to move our team work completely online, or to support volunteers who were isolated in their homes. In March 2020, we were not able to imagine either that the pandemic would stay with us for long. In the meantime, however, we significantly adapted our practices and grew into our role as sending, hosting and coordinating organisation in the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). In the following article, we want to share some of our experiences and practical advice – for future pandemics and crisis situations, but also the day-to-day work with ESC projects.

Being a Sending Organisation in times of a pandemic

At the time when the pandemic started to directly affect us in March 2020, we were the sending organization for six young people doing their voluntary services in Spain, Greece, Lebanon, Jordan, and Latvia. In mid-March, a number of quick decisions had to be taken. Our most important learning outcomes of March/April 2020 and the following months were:

Let the volunteer and their parents decide and support their decision - In the early days of the pandemic, it was very difficult to predict the development of the situation, the risks posed by the new virus, and the duration of lockdowns and restrictions. As a sending organization, we quickly realized:

- The decision about whether to continue or cancel projects should be primarily up to the volunteer and their parents

- As sending organisations, we should support the decision process with as much information as possible so they can take an informed decision

- If the project is cancelled, we should provide online meetings for the volunteer and hosting organisation to have a final "closing" and be mindful of the emotional effect that a sudden end of the volunteering activity might have on the volunteer

A number of volunteers decided to stay and sit out the lockdown in their new home abroad with adapted tasks inside their hosting organizations, while others decided to go home immediately.

Provide as much Information as possible at application stage - During the planning of future activities that started in summer 2020 and later on, we provided as much information as possible about the risks of going abroad at the time, and the living and working conditions in times of the pandemic. Volunteers and their families were then able to take an informed decision on whether to start an ESC project or not.

- Information about living and working in times of the pandemic should be included in the call for applicants

- Clarify with volunteers and hosting organisations whether the volunteers have to be vaccinated against Covid-19 in order to take part in the activities of their hosting organisations at application stage

Embassies and emergency contacts - During the pandemic, but also for all the ESC sending activities we organised since, we remind all volunteers to:

- Register on the ELEFAND list, a service provided by the German Government that ensures that German citizens abroad are informed by the local embassies in emergency situations.

- Compile an emergency sheet for each volunteer, which gathers their contact data, the data of one relative that should be contacted in case of emergency, and their insurance data.

Being a Hosting and Coordinating Organisation in times of a pandemic

Our organization was coordinating 9 volunteers in Bremen when the pandemic started, two of which were hosted directly in our team. The volunteers were living in three flats, located not far from each other, and volunteered across seven hosting organizations. From March 2020 onwards, we took several measures that proved to be successful at that time, and are also important learnings on how we are now organizing our voluntary services.

Community support for volunteers - Being in the same situation, despite being from different backgrounds, volunteers can best support each other. They struggle with similar things, and through living together, they can become each other's most important confidants. During the first three months of the pandemic, we aimed to increase the support that volunteers can give to each other, particularly since they could not attend the On-Arrival and Midtem-Trainings and thus not get to know other volunteers in other parts of Germany. We founded a group on Facebook, which had a team of four administrators – two ESC coordinators and two volunteers of two different organisations. We planned weekly activities for all volunteers of our organisations, and also later included more volunteers hosted in Germany in the group. The online activities ranged from informal hangouts, to presentations, photo challenges, virtual cooking classes, building a map of nice places to visit in our country, and much more. While the interest in virtual activities declined when summer came, the group has been a useful method of increasing the contacts of volunteers in Germany during the early days of the pandemic. Therefore, our advice to other coordinators is:

- Make sure that your volunteers have opportunities to connect with other volunteers in their hosting city, region or country. If needed, try to actively facilitate that contact to prevent volunteers from feeling isolated.

Community Support for Coordinators - Using existing structures of communication between ESC Coordinators in Germany, we joined regular self-organised online meetings for youth workers dealing with similar issues connected with the sending and hosting of volunteers during the pandemic. As a group, we were also able to voice common questions and concerns in an open letter to our National Agency. Exchanging worries, ideas and good practices with other Coordinators proved to be really valuable, not only professionally but also emotionally. Therefore, we advise all organisations to:

- Establish groups on social media or other digital platforms with other ESC Coordinators to exchange good practises in difficult situations
- Team up with other Coordinators to voice your combined concerns and questions to your National Agency

Information for volunteers – One of the defining state of minds in the early pandemic was the feeling of being confused and lost in all the new regulations. Without knowledge of the German language and legislature, it was quite difficult for the volunteers to figure out new rules and local information on the development of the pandemic. Practises that we adopted and that worked well for us were:

- Regularly gather and translate the most recent information on Covid-19 regulations for your volunteers
- Compile a separate overview of CIGNA rules related to Covid-19
- Write a strategy plan for what to do in case any of the volunteers would develop symptoms and share it with your volunteers and colleagues for worst case scenarios

Volunteering from home – While all volunteers were usually going to the offices and premises of their hosting organizations before the pandemic

started, the new regulations meant that most of them had to work from home. Some hosting organisations went into total lockdown, while others only rarely had meetings in person. As coordinating organization, we made sure that each hosting organization could adapt their processes of mentoring their volunteer and giving them tasks that can be carried out remotely. Our advice would therefore be:

- Check in with your hosting partners more regularly and create a support network with each other

- Sit down with your volunteers and redraft their work content so it can be done remotely. Possibilities are for example creating publicity materials, refurbishing the website, creating a themed online map of the city, reorganising your social media channels, and organising online skill-share workshops.

- Be mindful to also provide training to carry out the new tasks – for example workshops on digital design tools, online team management tools or website maintenance

Addresses for psychological support – One of the effects of the pandemic was a general increase in mental health problems. From our experience, we recommend to:

- Compile a list of access points for different kinds of psychological support in your city – from informal chats to social workers for young people, to specific self-organized groups and professional psychologists

Other useful sources for Psychological Support in volunteering projects issued by Lernen und Helfen in Übersee e.V. can be found here.

Arrival and quarantine plans – With the start of new volunteering activities from late summer 2020 onwards, we came up with a system on how to organize the arrival and quarantine of the new volunteers. For each arrival, we prepared the testing appointment in the city, the first food shopping, and made sure that the flatmates and their hosting organization were informed about the new volunteer who would be in quarantine. Our advice is therefore to:

- Write a detailed strategy plan for the volunteer and your organisation about how you will organise their arrival and inform everyone who will be directly or indirectly in contact with the new volunteer. This includes the hosting organisations of the flatmates of the new volunteer.

Looking ahead

All in all, the pandemic has been a challenging time for our organisation and the coordination of ESC volunteers. However, despite all challenges, we were able to increase the network of hosting organizations and volunteers in Bremen and abroad, and are grateful that we were able to continue our work. Though some of our learnings described above are specific to the Covid-19 pandemic, we will apply them also after this pandemic ends and are confident that they made us more flexible for other challenges.

Mindfulness in Crisis management

Introduction

Life can bring all sorts of unpleasant situations, crises into our lives. Let's find constructive ways to be prepared for whatever comes our way. Being mindful during difficult times, asking the right questions to help us manage any situation in the way that is best for us, and combining it all with the right neurological states that empower us are all topics this article addresses.

Why did I choose this tool?

It is okay to be overwhelmed, who isn't? Unless you live in a village and gaze at cow pastures all day long, you probably are. Below are listed tools intended to help us manage any crisis that we might face in life. They are here to serve us a lifetime.

How does this apply to being a trainer?

As a trainer, one is accountable for oneself and many other people they come into contact with. A trainer has the power and a gift to help those in need during a crisis. What better way to help than to teach and share tried-and-tested tools for managing crisis situations in their lives.

Main content:

Mindfulness is a state where we are fully present and aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. (mindful.org)

Sounds so, so simple, yet there we are, jumping from one thought to another, running round in circles, losing touch with our bodies and the basic reality that surrounds us, falling into anxiety. What to do about this?

Every one of us has the basic capacity to be mindful and focused regardless of what might be happening around us. Mindfulness is about finding refuge in ourselves and nothing but finding our own inner island that nobody can take from us, whether it's raining or there is a storm outside. Let's find this island, dear reader.

Take a look at the following image. This little boy sitting among the stars may see the stars, or he just may be concentrated on his inner thoughts. Being mindful or having a full mind - the choice is up to us:

RAIN

RAIN is a wonderful mindfulness- based model helping us work with whatever difficult emotions we are feeling during times of crises. It is an acronym standing for: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Non-Identify.

For example, if we find ourselves overwhelmed by strong emotions, the first thing is to recognize what is happening. We look at it in a non-judgemental way. We tune in to how the emotion or state is present in our bodies and minds, the direct experience of it all. It

can help to mentally name whatever is happening, for example, say, "I am feeling overwhelmed." This recognition opens up space inside you to help you connect with yourself fully.

We then allow things to be as they are. This means no resistance to the upsetting emotions and states. We don't have to like them. We just need to drop our resistance to them because this will create more chaos in us, more struggling, and more tension. In such a state we are more likely to react instead of consciously choosing how to respond. By allowing them, we may sense an immediate sense of ease around the unpleasant inner state.

The next step is to investigate our inner response to the outside event. Interestingly, sometimes, the first two steps might be enough for the unpleasant emotions to pass and you might not even need the third step. In case you do need it, this is how you go about it

- ask yourself, "Why do I feel like this? What events influenced this emotion to arise? Are there any physiological factors that brought it about (hunger, not enough sleep)? What do I need right now to nurture and support myself in this difficult time? These questions can help us form a wiser relationship with ourselves.

The last step is to choose to not identify with all of that because you know you are so much more than your thoughts and emotions – you are the pure awareness lying behind it all.

Knowing that who you are is not defined by your thoughts and emotions brings about a natural sense of peace. No matter how intense they might feel, there is a silent and untouched part of you beneath it all. Let's access that part. (mrsmindfulness.com)

You can use this method anytime and the more you use it, the easier and more natural it will be for you. It is very powerful.

Awareness in Everyday Life

Awareness in everyday life is key to being prepared for managing any crisis situation. We can practice the three lights of awareness when unexpected

feelings are provoked. It's good practice to follow these three steps:

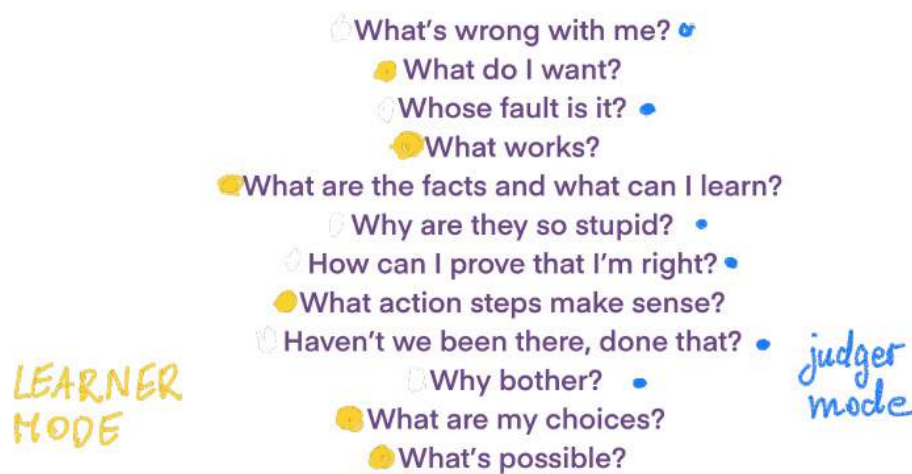## Asking the Right Questions – the Judger Mode vs the Learner Mode

Also, to get out of the hassle of our upsetting thoughts and find the right ways to deal with whatever life brings on us, we can reconsider what questions we ask ourselves in such situations. Instead of asking ourselves "What's wrong with me?", let's ask something more constructive instead. One might suggest that it is these questions we ask ourselves day in and day out that got us into a pickle in the first place.

How to ask more convenient questions that make life easier for us? The simple process of asking ourselves the right questions is so important when managing a crisis. Marilee Adams writes about this beautifully in the book, "Change Your Questions, Change Your Life".

For example, when someone suggests a new idea to you, if you go into analysis mode why the idea won't work, and you start doubting the reasons why someone suggested the idea in the first place, you are probably in the judger mode. Consider switching to the learner mode and start asking those questions instead. The following are the judge and learner set of questions:

What's wrong with me?
What do I want?
Whose fault is it?
What works?
What are the facts and what can I learn?
Why are they so stupid?
How can I prove that I'm right?
What action steps make sense?
Haven't we been there, done that?
Why bother?
What are my choices?
What's possible?

LEARNER MODE

judger mode

Negative and Positive Emotional Attractors

However, questions alone might not be enough. There are also our conditioned neurological and emotional states we need to investigate. These too need adjusting.

For this purpose, we are presenting you with the model of Negative and Positive Emotional Attractors (NEA and PEA). This model is one of its kind. It combines positive versus negative emotions, our hormonal arousal, and neurological activation. (www.frontiersin.org)

When experiencing PEA, our parasympathetic nervous system is in charge, blood pressure is decreased, working memory enhanced and we are more likely to connect with others. We feel joy, amusement, hope, and elation. We are oriented toward learning and promotion.

During NEA, on the other hand, our fight-or-flight, stress-based response is in charge. Our breathing, pulse and blood pressure are increased, we feel defen-

siveness, guilt, shame, fear, anxiety, our executive functions are decreased and we are out of sync with others. We are focused on performance and prevention.

So, we need to look at our breathing, our hormones as well as our emotions when we are dealing with crisis situations. No wonder why we hear that all so popular saying, "Take a deep breath first." The underlying message is much deeper than it might seem at first.

So, the goal here is to spend more time in PEA, because that is where our optimal body-- mind response to outside life is.

Take a look at the following drawing, and the differences in stone: the yellow stones with flowers are PEA and the blue stones with something that looks like fire are NEA. With particular exercises, we can stay longer in the state of PEA and just sometimes enough to step into NEA. Nevertheless, we need to visit both stones in our lives. Only - we should stay longer in PEA.

The RAIN method, the three lights of awareness, judger vs learner questions and PEA and NEA are all valuable hacks to whatever comes your way, dear reader. Use them often and reap the fruits of a more peaceful life they bring. Just try. :)

Exercise 1:

This is an exercise to be done via Zoom or any other video-chat platform. If done during an online training, participants are put into breakout rooms (2 min).

- Just look into the eyes of another person, look at what is behind him or her, in the room, look carefully, with curiosity. Try to connect with another person. Don't talk, try to be together, even though there is a screen in between the two of you.

- When people enter back into the main room, do an introduction round asking them "how do you feel", instead of "who are you" :).

Reflection questions:

- How did the exercise feel for you?

- Did you feel having a moment of genuine connection with another person, although it was online?

- Would you feel more comfortable doing this with someone you do not know, or someone you know and what would the difference be for you?

- If there are 3 people from your life you would like to try this exercise with, can you name them here? How would you ask them to do this?

Example: "Dear Friend, can I have a video call with you? I do not want to talk, I just want to see you, really see you."

Exercise 2:

Which of the following questions sound the most familiar to you? Which of them do you ask yourself in stressful moments? Which questions do you always/most often/never use?

- What's wrong with me?
- What do I want?
- Whose fault is it?
- What works?
- What are the facts and what can I learn?
- Why are they so stupid?
- How can I prove that I'm right?
- What action steps make sense?
- Haven't we been there, done that?
- Why bother?
- What are my choices?
- What's possible?

Classify which questions in your opinion belong to learner mode and which ones belong to the judger mode and refer to the top of the article to check if you were correct. For which questions could you start switching from judger mode to the learner one TODAY?

Exercise 3:

Sit comfortably and follow a guided RAIN meditation.

Here's an excerpt of a RAIN-based meditation, you can use it on yourself or others any time:

https://www.mindful.org/tara-brach-rain-mindfulness-practice/

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