

This information sheet is part of a set that was prepared based on the experiences of NP workers in Quebec. The purpose of these info sheets is to equip facilitators for their facilitation role and for managing more specific situations in order to advance the skills development and support of each participating parent. They complement and supplement other program documents.

Program *Nobody's Perfect*

TIP SHEET 4

Crisis Situations Arising During Group Workshops



Even though the NP program is not intended for families that are in a crisis situation, we may be unable to properly assess the parent's capacity for participating in and committing to a group approach, or the crisis situation may occur part-way through the program.

WHAT IS A CRISIS?

A crisis is a relatively short period of psychological imbalance in a person faced with an event that he/she perceives or experiences as harmful, a problem or a threat and that the person cannot escape or resolve with his/her usual coping and problem-solving mechanisms.

A participating parent who experiences a crisis situation often feels lacking in the intellectual and emotional capacity to continue participating fully and actively in the group. He/she often has confused ideas, shows considerable agitation or passiveness, or displays other signs of disturbance.

WHAT DOES THIS SITUATION BRING TO THE GROUP?

When a situation arises during a workshop, the participating parents may react in various ways:

some will be empathetic toward the parent who is going through a crisis, whereas others may quickly display signs of impatience and irritability.

The facilitator's role becomes very important. He/she will have to simultaneously consider the needs of the vulnerable parent, the participating parents and the group. Turning this particular crisis into a situation that any parent is likely to experience or has already experienced fosters group cohesiveness and prevents exclusion and rejection, while making it possible to achieve the group's objectives.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The facilitator will have to be attentive to the well-being of the parent going through a crisis situation, to the well-being of the other parents and to the program objectives.

- Obtain the group's agreement on supporting the most vulnerable parent.
- Link all the parents because they are all likely to experience similar episodes (generalize: "As parents, we are all likely at some point to experience a crisis or a destabilizing situation").



- Managing limitations is the key:
 - The facilitator speaking to the vulnerable parent: “What do you need right now; how can the group help you?”
 - The facilitator speaking to the group: “Would you agree to us taking 15 minutes to support Jennifer in the situation she is sharing with us?” and the facilitator manages the time, the tenor of the interventions and the participants’ comfort level, then generalizes the learning.

It is important to do a recap with the whole group before they leave in order to not to give rise to other crises within the group.

Avoid the following:

- Spending too much time on the subject without the group’s agreement.
- Letting the person expand on his/her difficult past; that takes us away from the situation to be dealt with.
- Underestimating the depth of the crisis because the person doesn’t say much about his/her distress.
- Becoming sympathetic, either by babying the parent or by getting pulled into the drama unfolding in front of us.

PERSONALITY CONFLICTS DURING A WORKSHOP

If two people participating in your group are bickering, it can quickly divide the entire group. Here are a few suggestions for guiding your intervention:

- Explain that a number of perspectives can be identified from a given situation, and then draw the connection with situations in family life, with problem-solving (for a given behaviour, different solutions can be identified because the important thing is to think about why, and what is important for one person may be less important for the other, etc.).
- Assign roles to the bickering parents: the parent who enables us to evaluate all possible options for a given situation, the parent who is open to favouring reflection, etc.;
- The facilitator should quickly identify the need behind these behaviours (the need to be acknowledged, to be heard, etc.), because as long as the need goes unaddressed, it will make itself felt.

Individuals always act with the aim of achieving well-being or avoiding a threat using the resources they have.

REFERRALS

It is very important to recognize one’s limitations and to know how to provide referrals. Our role as a facilitator is to ensure that the group runs smoothly and to support learning. It is not to step in on an individual basis or to resolve the problem. If the situation that arises needs to be referred to other resources, then, with the group’s help, we provide appropriate information.

It’s a good idea for you, as a facilitator, to visit or call the organizations in your community to find out what services they provide and how to refer people if need be.

Personal referrals (“Julie is expecting your call. I already told her that a parent from our organization might contact her”) often increase the likelihood that the parent will act on the referral.

Authors:

Guyline Beaumier, Social Worker and NP master trainer for Quebec

Chantal Simoneau, Intervention Coordinator and NP facilitator, L’Évasion St-Pie X

Contributors:

Vicky Genois, CIUSSS Capitale-Nationale

Lucie Nadeau, NP facilitator, Famille Plus

Project coordination:

Geneviève Poirier, Public Health Branch, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

This tip sheet was prepared with financial support from the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs and support from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

