

Crisis Recognition And Response

ICAT: Integrating Communications,
Assessment, and Tactics



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM



Crisis Recognition And Response



Question to Consider

- **What are the key challenges police officers face when dealing with persons in behavioral crisis?**



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Behavioral Crisis: A Definition

- An episode of mental and/or emotional distress that is creating instability or danger and is considered disruptive by the community, friends, family or the person him/herself

Adapted from the Seattle Police Department



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- **How Does a Crisis Typically Occur?**
 - Precipitating event
 - Person's perception of the event
 - Normal methods of coping fail
 - Resulting in ...
 - Breakdown in control
 - Inability to respond appropriately
 - Feeling overwhelmed

*Adapted from Police Training Institute
University of Illinois*

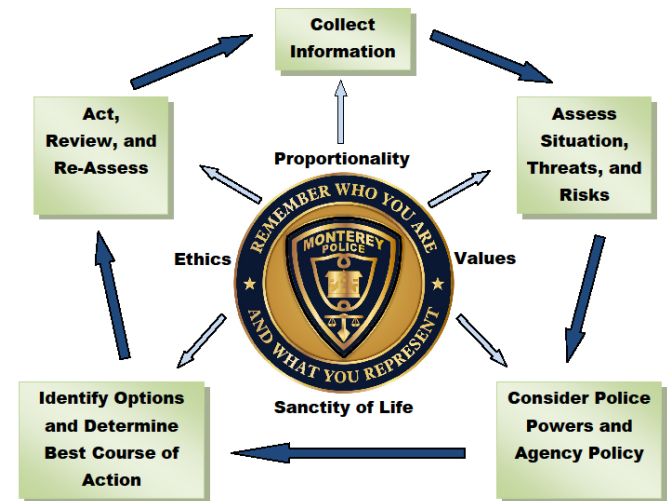


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■ Why Should I Care?

- People in crisis need help
- Crises can impact public and officer safety
- It's our job – to serve and protect
- Reflects mission, values & ethics – sanctity of life



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- **Why do you want to know what's behind someone's erratic behavior?**
 - Best approaches to help stabilize the situation
 - What communications strategies to employ
 - What additional resources you may need

Up-front awareness and recognition are key to a safe and effective response.

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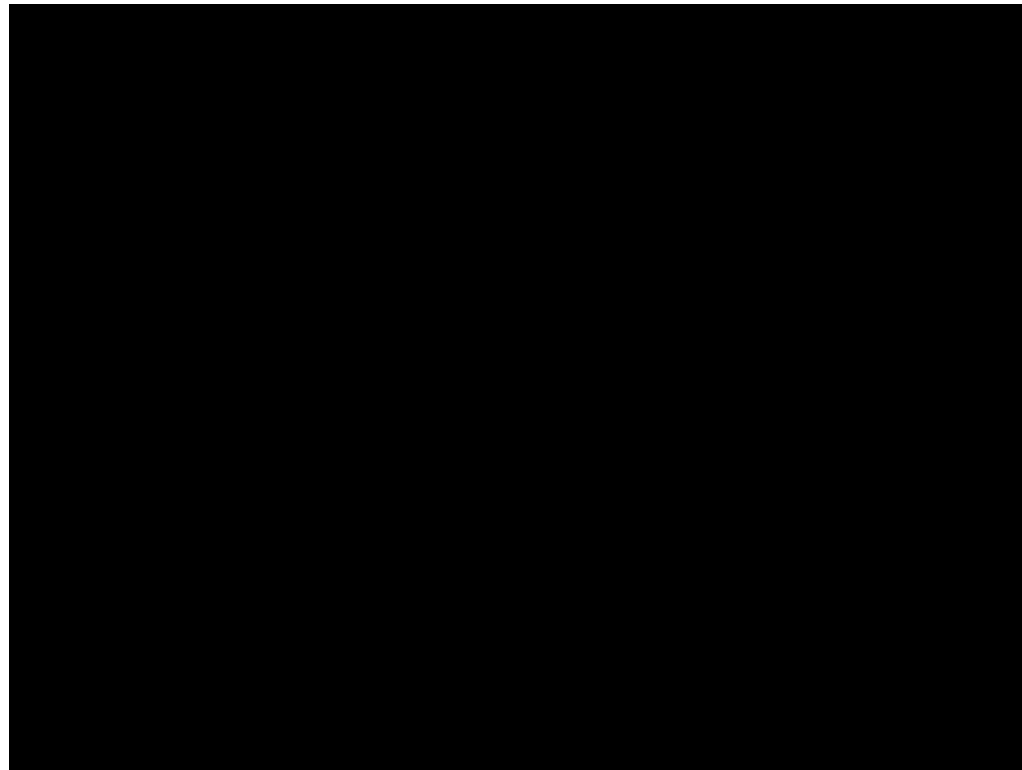
Responding to a Person in Crisis



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**What the encounter looks like
from another perspective**



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- **Some Facts about People with Mental Illness**
 - Biological illness like heart disease or cancer
 - Nobody “chooses” to develop a mental illness
 - There is no cure, but many people stabilize to live full, productive lives
 - Medications help, but they are not perfect and there can be episodes or side-effects

Adapted from Seattle Police Department



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- **People with Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System**
 - People with serious mental illness can be violent
 - But most people with mental illness are not, and never will be, violent
 - Jail is often not a helpful place to get stabilized
 - Most people, even in a behavioral crisis, respond positively to kind and patient behavior

*Sources: National Institute of Mental Health,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*



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Crisis Intervention

- A process to assist individuals in finding safe and productive outcomes to unsettling events

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- **Two Principles Guiding Your Response**
 - Your mission is not to diagnose or treat/solve underlying issues
 - Your top priority is to verbally defuse and stabilize the situation, when feasible



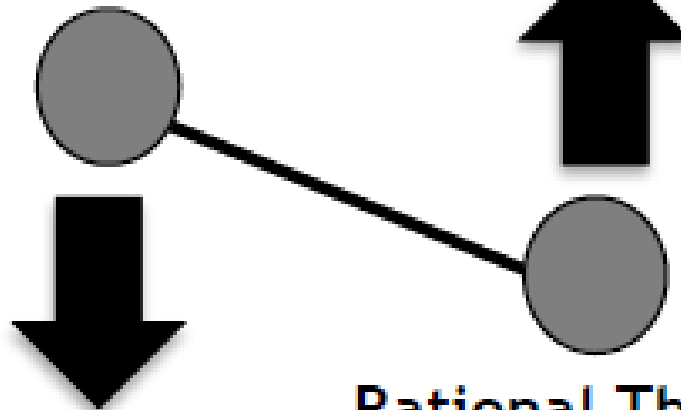
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■ Emotional–Rational Thinking Scale

Active Listening

Emotions



Rational Thinking



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- **Three-Phase Response Process**
 - Ensure the scene is safe
 - Try to get the person stabilized
 - Begin the problem-solving process
(often by bringing in other resources)



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■ Trying to Defuse a Critical Situation Does Not...

- Take away your discretion to make an arrest, where probable cause exists
- Restrict your ability to use force when faced with an imminent threat

***But these should be considered last resorts
whenever possible***



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- **How To Approach Persons in Crisis – Some Practical Tips and Techniques**
 - Request backup & specialized help
 - Don't rush (unless immediate action needed)
 - Continually assess and re-assess
 - Communicate, communicate, communicate
 - Have a conversation
 - Clear and simple statements
 - Open-ended questions
 - Active listening

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- **How To Approach Persons in Crisis – Some Practical Tips and Techniques**
 - Request backup & specialized help
 - Don't rush (unless immediate action needed)
 - Continually assess and re-assess
 - Communicate, communicate, communicate
 - Watch your body language
 - Be aware of "hot buttons" and "hooks"
 - Consider "doing the opposite"
 - Always be respectful

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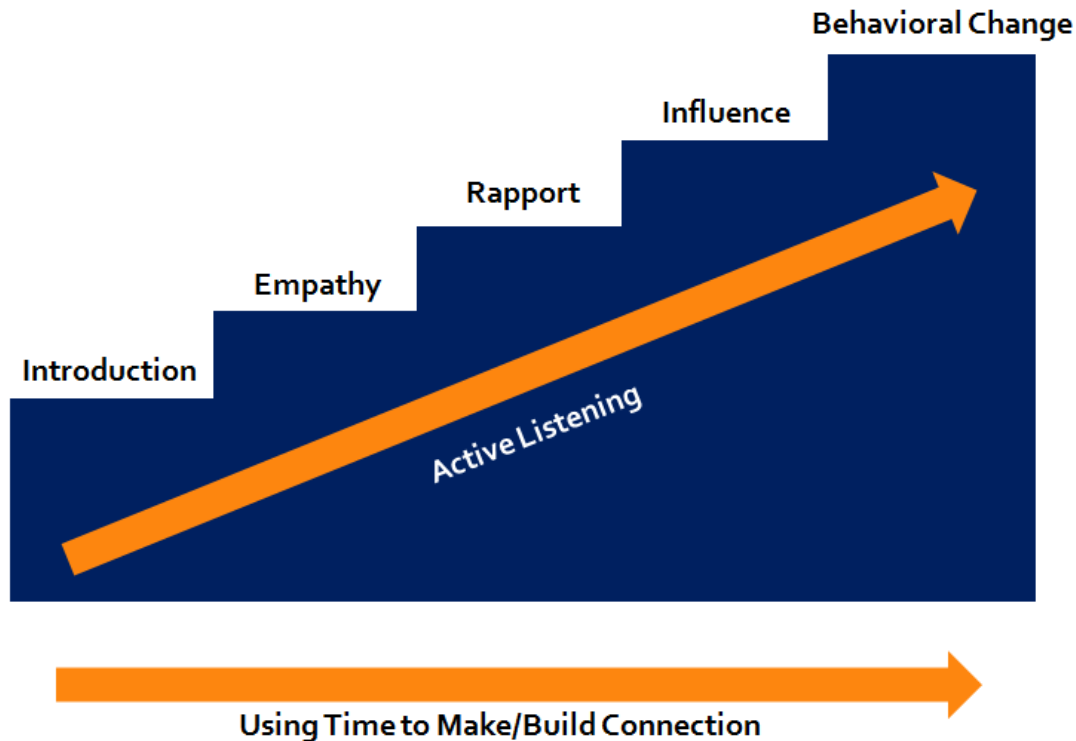
- **Your Goal: Make a Connection**



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■ Behavioral Change Staircase



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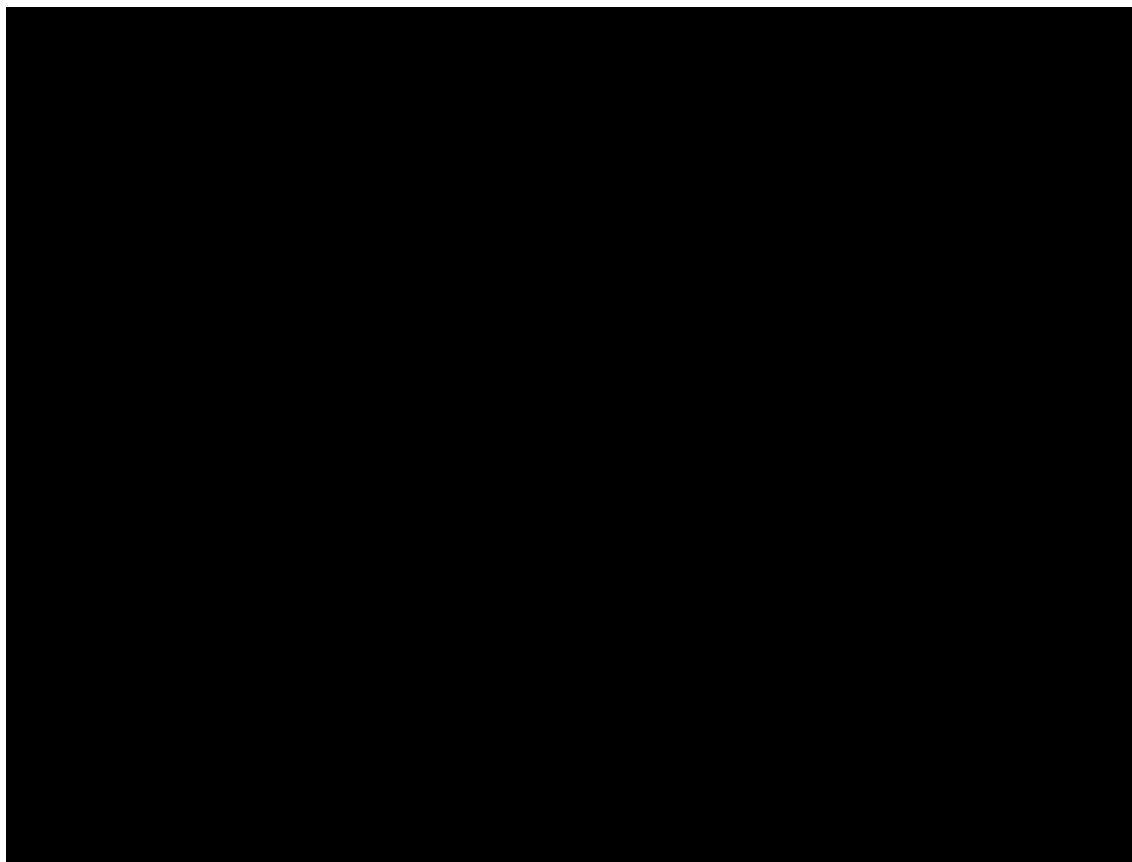
- **Some Things Not To Do**
 - Don't join in the person's behavior
 - Don't confuse the person
 - Don't diminish the person
 - Don't lie or deceive
 - Don't automatically view non-compliance as a threat

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- **Manage Your own Reactions**
 - Officers can experience similar physiological changes as a subject in crisis
 - Important to consciously slow your breathing, move slowly and smoothly, and stay in control

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■ Quick Recap

- There could be many causes for a person to be in crisis – mental illness is one of them
- Your priority is not to diagnose and resolve the situation – it's to defuse, stabilize and get help

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■ Quick Recap

- As emotions rise, rational thinking declines – lowering their emotions helps people think more rationally
- Empathy, communication, respect, making a connection – all about trying to get **voluntary compliance**

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Thoughts?
Questions?
Observations?

