

## Week #3

### What Is a Crisis? What Causes a Crisis?

Webster's Dictionary defines a crisis as a crucial time or a turning point.

This often refers to a person's internal reaction to an external hazard. It is a disruption to the balance of someone's life. Often, there is an increase in anxiety, depression, and tension. Also, there is a temporary loss of coping abilities, although this emotional disruption is reversible.

So, what causes a crisis? A crisis is an event involving loss that leads to the loss of equilibrium in everyday functioning.

Some factors causing a crisis could include a loss that is too overwhelming to cope with, such as the death of a loved one. There may be a minor problem that, for a given person, is too great a loss for that person's coping system. An example may be the loss of a pet within a short time after losing a close friend and a parent. Or, a crisis may occur when a problem occurs at a time of special vulnerability, when someone's normal coping mechanism is not working, or a support system is lacking. An example here might be a job loss and the resulting financial insecurity while receiving a large hospital bill.

So, it may not even be an actual event that causes the crisis. It is often a person's response to the event that brings on the crisis.

Next Week: Elements of a crisis