



# Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training: Part 3: Crisis Intervention

## Facilitator's Guide

Erika's Lighthouse is a not-for-profit depression and mental health education organization that educates upper elementary, middle school and high school communities about teen depression, eliminates the stigma associated with mental health issues and empowers teens to take charge of their mental health. For more information and other programs and resources, go to [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org).

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This program was written for educators, professionals and other adults working with adolescents to educate them regarding the issues surrounding depression. While Erika's Lighthouse consults with clinical, therapeutic, legal, and child development experts, nothing in this program should be construed as specific or general medical or psychological advice. Erika's Lighthouse assumes no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of the material or information contained in the program. Every child's and family's situation is unique, and Erika's Lighthouse urges children, adolescents, parents, and educators to seek and find competent professional advice appropriate for specific individuals and actions.

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## **Part 3: Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training**

### **Crisis Intervention**

In Part 3, staff will learn the definition of a crisis, how to de-escalate someone in crisis, how to assess someone who might be at risk for suicide and the importance of self-care."

#### **Slide 1: Introduction**

"Welcome to the Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training. This is part 3 of a 3-part series. This section of the training will cover what to do if someone is experiencing a crisis."

#### **Slide 2: Content Notice**

"This training contains discussions of depression, self-harm and suicide. We recognize this is a heavy topic. Many people are affected in various ways by the topic of suicide and mental illness and we want you to take what you need during this time"

#### **Slide 3: Agenda and Learning Objectives**

"We will learn the definition of crisis, how to de-escalate someone in crisis, how to assess someone who might be at risk for suicide and the importance of self-care.

It is always important to note that it is NOT a teacher's job to diagnose a student; rather, in your role as an educator or a trusted adult, by knowing some of the signs and risk factors, you can help identify a student in need and help connect that student to the appropriate mental health professionals or school staff members."

### **What is a Crisis?**

#### **Slide 4: Crisis**

"There may be a time when a student is unsafe due to their behavior. It may be something happening externally, like being aggressive or something internal and they are expressing suicidal ideation or hallucination. Regardless, all of this would indicate that this student will need an immediate intervention - a plan - to keep the student safe.

A crisis is defined as a disruption or breakdown in a person's normal or usual pattern of functioning. A crisis cannot be resolved by a person's customary problem-solving resources or skills. It is a time of intense difficulty where a person is in trouble or in danger."

#### **Slide 5: Elements of a Crisis**

"Perhaps you have a student in your class or on your caseload that usually responds to

stress or anxiety with a specific tool or technique. And in spite of suggestions to try that technique, the usual method of coping is not working. A different intervention will be called for and the timing will be critical. The basic elements of a crisis are: it happens during a stressful situation, the individual is having a difficult time coping and that the timing of the intervention is immediate.”

### **Slide 6: Types of Crisis**

“Basically, we are describing 3 types of crisis situations that may occur in a school. A medical emergency is when a student is showing signs of a medical emergency. For example, fainting, collapsing, chest pain, and irregular heartbeat. Aggressive behaviors are physical aggression toward others and property. A mental health crisis could be a panic attack, psychosis, or suicidal ideation. It is very important to remember that it is not your job to determine, label, or name the type of crisis or to evaluate the individual in crisis. It is your job to keep the individual safe and put a plan in place to get this person the medical attention they need.”

## **De-Escalation Strategies**

### **Slide 7: Assess & De-Escalate**

“If a student is experiencing a crisis, the goal is to assess the situation, de-escalate the individual, and connect them to the appropriate professional help.”

### **Slide 8: How do you Approach Someone in Crisis?**

“How do you approach someone in crisis? First, it is important to strive to keep calm yourself. You want to speak calmly and confidently. Keep your tone neutral and speak slowly. Try to get the individual to take a deep breath and ask them to describe how they are feeling. Make sure to let them know that you will keep them safe and that there is a plan for help. Reassurance that we will get through this. You are trying to de-stress the situation. A good analogy is to engage with the individual as you would approach ducks sitting on a pond.”

### **Slide 9: Tips for De-Escalating**

“If this is happening in real-time, you are assessing the situation in the moment and things might move quickly.

In general, this is recommended:

You are trying to remember that your job is to remain calm - you are modeling to this person how to de-escalate. This is not easy in the moment so trying to be aware of several points is important:

- Your body position should be neutral - your arms should not be crossed

- Keep some physical space between you and the individual so you are not threatening but you can also protect yourself if necessary
- Tone of voice and speaking slowly and softly will be a calming intervention
- Validating the emotions and the situation - not arguing - reflecting on how hard this may be in the moment
- Do not attempt to physically restrain but use your judgment to calm the situation

The key here is to assess what is going on and de-escalate the situation and get this individual to a safe place so the process of getting help can begin. "

#### **Slide 10: 30 Minutes to Calm Down**

"A return to normal baseline can take at least 30 minutes so keep your expectations in line for the rest of the class period. Goal is to be calm - and to follow your school protocol for getting this individual to help."

## **Suicide Risk Assessment**

#### **Slide 11: Ask the Question**

"Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide is like knowing CPR-it could save their life in a crisis situation. We all have a role to play. You don't have to be a mental health professional to help a student."

#### **Slide 12: Suicide Risk Assessment**

"You may have an individual who verbally expresses a wish to not be around, you have observed an act to self-harm, it may appear in their writing, in drawings on work or a peer reports that they have heard something about a student and they are worried for their safety. In any case an initial safety assessment needs to happen."

#### **Slide 13: Suicide Risk Assessment**

"This can be very overwhelming and know you can't say the wrong thing - but part of an assessment is to ask the pointed question directly - are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself? You will not be putting an idea into someone's head but you will be opening the door to a possible conversation. It is hard to ask that question but it can be life saving,

You will want to assess the situation- speak calmly, try to understand the individual's perspective and instill hope.

Clarify the situation by asking direct questions-are you thinking about killing yourself?

Ask if they have a plan-have you thought about how? Have you decided when?

It is important to never leave the person alone but you need to take action and call 911. Tell the dispatcher the person is at risk for suicide.

So, again it is being calm, being prepared that no matter what the individual says, your job is to get them to help immediately.

You cannot make assumptions about how serious or not a threat of suicide may be, so do not leave the person alone and start to follow the protocol of your building."

### **Slide 14: Take Care of Yourself**

"If you have to intervene when someone is in crisis, it is completely understandable that you could experience exhaustion, feel highly emotional, or like you need to take a break from the classroom. It's perfectly OK to feel this way. It is important that you lean on your colleagues and practice self-care. Remember, it could take you at least 30 minutes to come back to baseline as well."

### **Slide 15: Please complete the survey**

"If participants have not yet completed the Post-evaluation survey, please have them do so now using the QR code below."



"If you have additional questions for the Erika's Lighthouse staff, please feel free to reach out to them. Their contact information is on the screen. We will now move on to small group work."

## **Part 3.5: Small Group Work**

Part 3.5 is an opportunity for your participants to expand their learning and have a deeper conversation about the training. Below are three suggestions of resources that you can use during this time.

1. Read & Discuss [Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)
2. Review & Discuss [Sample Immediate Intervention](#)
3. [Self-Care Guide](#) - Have participants create their own self-care plan