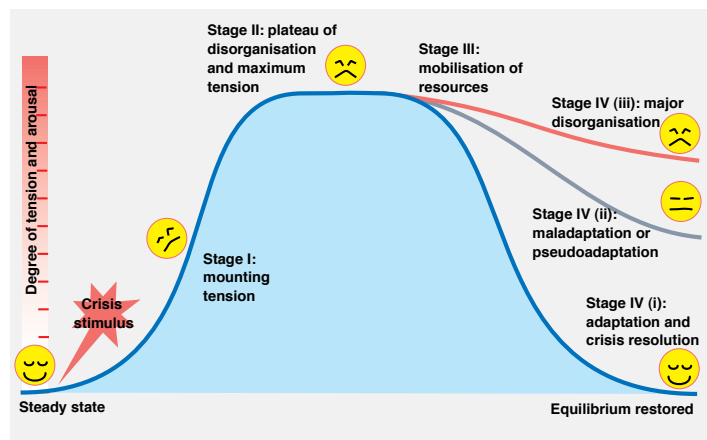


DISTRESSED PERSON



Stages of a crisis

A crisis is an event which, at least temporarily, threatens to overwhelm a person's normal coping mechanisms.

There is an obstacle that appears insurmountable. Tension mounts until the individual becomes agitated and disorganised. Useful solutions become hard to find, as the person veers from one ineffective strategy to another.

With the help of people around them, most people overcome their crises and emerge stronger than before. Some require intervention from their local doctor or community psychiatric team to limit self-destructive behaviour, prevent persistent symptoms, or treat associated mental illness.

Scenario

It is just coming up to Christmas and you overhear your colleague on the phone. After a stressful pregnancy, his wife has gone into labour six weeks early. She is at home with two crying children and doesn't know what to do. He is crying and shaking. You can hear him repeating "it can't come now".

Task

Some of you will be asked to tackle a similar practice scenario this month.

Discuss your approach with your colleagues before then.

Question

What is a psychotic illness?
How is it recognised?



Step-by-step

- ★ **Stay safe: Don't approach an aggressive patient alone. Never let the patient get between you and the exit. Remove potential weapons.**
- ★ **Stay calm: Allow the patient to "ventilate". Take a non-judgemental approach. Don't take things personally. Don't get angry.**
- ★ **Call your emergency number (or 000) if the patient is confused, hallucinating, behaving bizarrely, or threatening to hurt themselves or others.**
- ★ **Don't attempt in depth analysis. Look for practical ways to tackle Today's problems.**
- ★ **If the person settles down, arrange for family or friends to care for them at home.**
- ★ **If the situation remains tense, arrange for the person to go to the Emergency Department.**
- ★ **Suggest that everyone follows-up with their doctor or counsellor.**