

Crisis or Opportunity Script

Hello Direct Support Providers

We are going to share today how to turn what may seem like a crisis

Into an opportunity for learning and perspective

Let's hear from direct support provider Jessica

Every Thursday Jack and I would go to Adventure Bay. This was an activity that Jack looked forward to and came to expect on our weekly visits.

Upon arriving at Adventure Bay one week, it was under maintenance and not open. We discovered this when we walked to the entrance and the doors were locked. This took both Jack and I by surprise.

Jack was so great at following his schedule this type of last-minute change really upset him. To the best of my ability, I tried to explain to him that it was closed, and we would come back next week.

Jack continued to show his displeasure by stomping and using upset vocals. I offered alternate scenarios of what we could do for the evening instead, but Jack was not able to vocalize a response as he was so upset and communicated through gestures and pictures.

At this point I felt a little anxious wondering how and when we would leave the entrance of Adventure Bay, and worried for Jack's safety.

I knew Jack liked paper and crafts so when I reached in my pocket, I had a receipt. This seemed to catch Jack's attention and I used this as a tool to redirect him to thinking about another preferred activity, like making a paper craft that was possible instead of focusing on what was not available.

We got back into the van and I assured him there would be more craft supplies at home and we could continue the night with an activity.

Going forward, I decided to call Adventure Bay to ensure they were open on that day before going, as well as bringing Jack's visual schedule and Pecs into the community to help explain change and offer choice.

Also, the benefit of having a back up preferred activity planned, or an enticing object for redirection and comfort proved to be crucial to calming the situation.

Now let's hear from Direct Support Provider Melissa.

I picked up David and he didn't greet me in the way he normally does. He seemed upset and quiet.

I began to ask him if anything was wrong and he brushed me off. He assured me he was fine, so we carried about our day. I asked David to complete a task that we normally do, and he got very angry.

I gave him space to vent and talk through how he was feeling. He began asking challenging authority questions, like "Why do I have to do my homework. Who are you to tell me what to do? Who made you the boss?" I ignored those questions and only answered information seeking questions and gave a rational calm response.

These answers did not satisfy David as he continued to get more frustrated. I realized I could not force David to calm down and complete the task, I was getting into an unproductive power struggle. I decided to redirect his focus by offering choices & setting limits.

By setting limits, you are offering choices as well as stating the results of these choices being desirable and less desirable. Limits are better received for anyone when it was lead with a positive choice stated first. Limits must be simple / clear, reasonable, and enforceable.

I posed the option that "When you complete your homework, then we can play video games." "If you calm down, we can make a plan to complete your homework so we can play your new video game." Interrupting and re directing the conversation and David's energy level helped him calm down.

I gave him a few minutes to fully calm down but re engaged with him to get to the cause of why he was so upset. David typically completed his homework weekly, so this change in behavior was a surprise to me.

I asked him how his day was again, and he told me that he was having a hard time at school with bullies. As well, his pet at home was very sick.

These 2 events in David's day caused him to come into our respite time with heightened anxiety and anger. What I did not realize is there could be precipitating factors that I have no control over.

I used this crisis to better understand that there are internal and external factors that influence ones behaviour. It could be fear, anxiety, phobias, previous life experiences, physical environment like noise, temperature, or the attitudes and behaviors of others that can have control over our behaviour.

Offering an open non-judgmental approach to a situation where someone is in distress can help to not escalate a situation and can be used to better understand the individual you support and how to connect with them.

The previous scenarios provide excellent examples of the importance of your actions when responding to difficult situations.

The acronym PAUSE acts a good guidepost. It is important to stop and pause and think about the best way to respond to the needs of the child or youth.

Think about what **Purpose** your response will serve. Think about your body language, your volume, and tone of your voice. Make sure your response is one that serves the purpose of trying to relive the anxiety this child or youth is feeling.

Be mindful to give an **Appropriate** response. Different forms of support will be appropriate in different settings. Always respond in a respectful manner.

Every child and youth are **U**nique, and the plan for therapeutic rapport will always be unique. The most important thing is to provide an empathetic response that helps the child or youth feel empowered, respected, and safe.

Your response should provide support that strengthens the bond you have with the child or youth. At times you may be able to talk about the situation, and how it can be worked through in the future creating opportunities for **S**uccess.

Be sure to always **E**cho your guiding principles. Every child has gifts to offer those around them. Provide support to help them shine.

An excellent way to help strengthen the understanding of what works best for the child is to develop a one-page profile. A one-page profile was originally developed by Helen Sanderson and is based on information gathered by those who know the child very well.

One-page profiles can be used for individuals of every age and can be used to capture, themes, items, activities, and information that can help assist others of gaining a better understanding of who this individual is and what gifts they have to offer.

When supporting children, we look to parents or guardians who can tell us how to best support their child. We also know that siblings can provide information that can be extremely valuable in creating a profile that will honor the child's individualism.

Direct support providers are encouraged to connect with their family coordinator who would be happy to assist with creating a profile that can help strengthen the relationship that this child or youth has with others.

This is an example of a one-page profile. You can see that Adam is 5 years old and his favorite character is Spiderman.

We talk about that is most important to Adam, what makes him happy. We try to look at things from his perspective. A good day for Adam, would be being able to play outdoors and explore nature.

We also talk about what people appreciate the most about Adam, his gifts & talents. We see that he is a happy little guy that likes to share and be with friends.

And finally, we talk about how to best support Adam. This is an important section where we talk about how he communicates, his daily living routine, and any safety concerns that need to be acknowledged in order to keep him safe.

A one-page profile is a great tool to compile all the wonderful things you learn about a young person during your time together.

It can also shed light on some of the challenges you have worked through together and give suggestions to others on how to navigate through those times.

We hope that today's video helped reinforce the point that a crisis does not have to have a negative outcome.

These valuable learning opportunities can be used to better support the young person and strengthen your connection and understanding of one another.

Family Respite Services, a community where families are strong, and all children belong.