



Combating crisis situations by innovative STEM tools and entrepreneurship skills

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

## Course content

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# 1. Guide introduction

## 1.1.ABOUT CRIS GUIDES

Welcome to the guide on Crisis Management. This is the first in a series of three guides that are together designed to outline a unique and comprehensive curriculum on how to equip kids with the right understanding, mindset, and tools to successfully navigate uncertain, difficult situations that life will throw at them. The three guides combined aim to:

1. Build awareness of crisis as a wholesome event with life-changing consequences
2. Introduce curious and proactive mindset of the doers to construct behavioural patterns of people who get things done and not stand still waiting for others to offer solutions
3. Establish a structured way to address challenges, issues, problems, and crises
4. Include a note of importance of knowing and understanding various advanced, digital technologies with high potential to play major role in the development of solutions in occurrence of crisis

While the Crisis Management Guide is part of a series, it can, at the same time, be used and applied individually and independently of other two guides. Although authors desire is to use it in combination with others to maximise the learning outcomes and create proactive and prosocial leaders of tomorrow, they acknowledge that this might not always be possible nor feasible and have therefore designed this guide in a way it can be used withing array of topics and complimented by many other lessons and guides.

## 1.2.ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Have you ever found yourself in a situation that seemed almost surreal, sad, shocking, and unbelievable? And when you looked around you saw other people being in the same situation, some having it worse than others? Then you have been involved in a crisis.

In today's day of age most of us have experienced at least one crisis, whether it was covid-19 pandemic, war, extreme weather conditions, economic disasters or some sort of a personal event that changed our life.

In the Crisis Management Guide, we focus on understanding crisis situations or events, defining what crisis is, and learning about different aspects of crisis through real world examples. We also look at the mechanisms to recognise crises and classify them, and finally, we look at what we can do to be better prepared for different crises, as well as how to turn a negative situation such as a crisis into an oppportunity for growth, change and improvement for a better future.

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### 3. Crisis

In late 2019 the first known case of disease called Covid-19 was identified in Wuhan, China. It then spread quickly worldwide, resulting in the pandemic. This is not a history lesson, it is a recent event, called the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two according to the United Nations (<https://www.undp.org/coronavirus>). We are talking about the defining global health crisis of our time COVID-19 Pandemic.

The early warnings from the World Health Organization (WHO) first sounded far-fetched, almost surreal when cases started to pop up around the world back in December. Almost no one could have imagined why a few hundred cases could be so alarming. Fast forward two months, two cases were reported from Italy on 31st January 2020. Merely a month and a half later, Italy overtook China in the number of deaths related to coronavirus disease. A week later, the United States ascended to the number 1 in terms of mortality due to COVID-19. Less than two years into the pandemic, Reuters estimated that the total, global number of deaths due to COVID-19 exceeds 5 million.

COVID-19 is a disease derived from coronavirus that emerged in China in December 2019. COVID-19 is a severe disease and has caused millions of deaths all over the world as well as lasting health problems in many individuals who have survived the illness. Coronavirus spreads from person to person very quickly. In humans, signs very similar to flu have been found, with fever and dry cough. As the pandemic spread around the world, other symptoms such as a loss of sense of smell or taste have emerged. The biggest problem of the coronavirus was that it is new and that no one has natural immunity to it.

At first people did not believe that COVID-19 is a real problem that we are facing. They did not take it seriously. With the unprecedented media coverage and loved ones and friends catching the virus at the same time, people finally got a glimpse into the reality of what was now known as a global crisis. Fear and panic quickly spread and so did societal challenges.

When the first COVID-19 death occurred, countries began to slow the spread of disease by testing and treating patients, social distancing, carrying out contact tracing, limiting travels, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gatherings such as sporting events, concerts, and schools. Every country needed to act immediately to prepare, respond and recover. However, no country was prepared for such an outbreak. For some time, there was confusion at the highest operating level, and no country could entirely agree on the best course of action. Each country did the best it could in accordance with the recommendations from WHO, other countries actions and the scarce data available.

On the other hand, people and their mental health has started to suffer, as governments continued to impose strict restrictions on movement and socialising. People's livelihoods and routines are disrupted, leading to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. During this period, people were facing mass job losses, businesses were closing, children and young people were

dropping out of school, there was an economic crisis, and people were falling into depression because they were schooling and working from home.

The world was enveloped in a global health emergency that is exacting enormous medical and economic tolls. All this has led to one of the biggest crises people have faced in recent times. Later, it also led to great divisions and discrimination between people, and to countries comparing themselves with each other.

While COVID-19 is undoubtedly the crisis of global proportions, not all crises are. Some might be more localised than others, for example crisis caused by natural disasters such as droughts, wildfire, tornadoes, and floodings to name just a few. But even an individual can have a crisis, an event or situation that is so severe and difficult that it becomes life changing.

Everyone is probably familiar with J. K. Rowling, the famous author of Harry Potter. Although she seems to have always been a successful, happy person, this is not the case. From even before Harry Potter was published, she was suffering from a severe form of depression.

In the early 1990s, she first moved near her sister in Scotland. Then shortly afterwards she got married, left the country after a three-year stay in Portugal. Because of a failed, unhappy marriage, she decided to continue as a single mother to her new-born child. For this dark time, she points out that she was out of work, a single mother, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern times without being homeless. This period was so hard for her that it pushed her into a dark depression, and she even contemplated suicide.

Fortunately, she found the strength within herself to seek help and writing her now famous works became her escape from reality and the light at the end of a dark tunnel. The idea of the Harry Potter series came to her some time ago, some of it even in Portugal. However, she only started writing it after dealing with the depression, when she was living in the UK again. While she was writing her first two works, she was still on welfare. Her mental illness was also a big inspiration for the third part.

She often points out that seemingly definitive failures can often be debilitating, they can break anyone. But her story is a fantastic example of the sun coming out after every rain, sometimes even accompanied by rainbows. Her example serves as a wonderful reminder that we can face and overcome even the worst personal crises.

J. K. Rowling always said that we always see the psychological bottom as a completed journey. We never see new possibilities; we are trapped in a loop of defeat. With the onset of depression and the lack of new opportunities, Rowling considered her low point as closure, a feeling that accompanied her failure. But she still believed in the story she kept telling herself. It gave her the strength to get through each new day. Her upward trajectory began after she sought help. With her defeat behind her, she learned that she had great potential for upward, for a better life.

In interviews, J. K. Rowling points out that when you reach that bottom, you have only two options - stay there, which means the end of you, or want more, look for a way out and believe that you still have countless possibilities. She chose the second option. She always points out, without

reservation, that without those dark times, she would not be what she is today. It has made her not only stronger, but a person who knows who she is and how difficult life can be.

When she was at the bottom, she dreamt about Harry. If she hadn't put it on paper then, she wouldn't be as famous today as she is, and she wouldn't be one of the best writers in the world. J. K. Rowling has shown how you can rise from the bottom to the top. Either way, no path is ever easy.

## 4. Defining Crisis

**Crisis is an unstable, negative situation where an individual, a group of individuals, or a society feels threatened. It is often associated with an unforeseen event, characterised by negative outcomes and severe, life changing consequences. The notion of these can in turn lead to insecurity, anxiety, intense fear, and helplessness often accompanied by hopelessness, panic, and denial. A crisis is always an unwanted and unexpected situation that causes damage to people, nature, organisations, or society and requires swift and immediate actions of everyone involved.**

Every one of us in life faces different problems, issues, and challenges, if not on a daily basis. They are definitely part of our lives. But it is very important to distinguish between them. Crises are something different from our personal, family or career problems/issues/challenges, and not just because they are larger in scale. Crises take control of human lives, they are characterised by change, high levels of uncertainty and complexity. Knowing the difference between problems, issues, and challenges on one side and crises on the other is very important because they require different solutions, responses and they have different characteristics. It is true that a crisis is the most threatening of all to human beings and society, but it is important to realise that any issue or problem can escalate, progress into a crisis.

## 5. The definition of problems, issues, and challenges

- **Challenge:** A challenge is a barrier to climb over. An opportunity for success and growth. It is a level or a situation at which an individual believes he can, or even better, will succeed if they put in enough effort. It is something that they choose. Examples of challenges include: *running a marathon, deciding on better grades next year, mastering a Rubik's Cube or learning how to ski.*

- **Issue:** An issue is a dilemma about which a person is thinking or talking. It is a small situation that we know how to solve, and it is not life changing. However, it can cause some annoyance or consume some form of resource to solve or deal with. Examples of an issue could be: *fake news, an argument, deciding which of two hobbies to take on (you like both but you can only choose one), an argument with a friend, a bad grade that you need to improve.*
- **Problem:** A problem is a task or situation that is difficult to solve or deal with because of its complexity. It arises when a person notices a discrepancy between his current situation and the goal he is pursuing, yet they do not know how to achieve or realise it. Examples of a problem include: *being in debt, losing a job, or bullying (the latter often escalates to a personal crisis).*



It is quite clear that there are important differences between these four concepts. Let's have a look at the key differences between the challenge, issue, problem, and crisis.

TERM	SEVERITY OF THE EVENT	SCALE OF IMPACT	EASE TO OVERCOME	URGENCY	IMPACT	TIME	POSSIBLE THREAT TO LIFE	LIFE ALTERING
CHALLENGE	Low	Individual	Easy	Low	Low	From hours up to a year	Non existing	Low

<b>ISSUE</b>	Low	Individual or group	Easy	Low	Low/medium	From hours up to a year	Low	Low
<b>PROBLEM</b>	Medium	Individual, group, or community	Moderate	Medium	Medium/bad	From hours up to a year	Medium	Medium
<b>CRISIS</b>	High	Individual, group, community, or society	Difficult	High	Critical	Clear start and end	High	High

So, at some point in our lives, we all face different situations that are presented as challenges, difficulties, problems, or crises. These can be experienced as individuals, groups, communities or even as a society. This means that some groups of such events may cross our personal borders, as well as national and international borders, for example in the event of a crisis. These situations are certainly not stable and can very quickly progress to the next phase and to a higher level - challenge to issue, issue to problem and problem to crisis. Of course, regression is also possible. For example, challenges can act as preventive measures, as something that can develop into a problem. If a challenge is not tackled enough times, it can become an issue or even a problem. At the point of regression, an issue or problem that a person becomes interested in and invested in solving can regress into a challenge. If the problem continues for a long time and is not dealt with, it will increase to a level that will eventually become a problem. A combination of complex problems, critical issues, or a combination of these can lead to a crisis if no, little or the wrong action is taken. On the other hand, when a crisis is handled properly, it will eventually revert to a more localised problem, and then the problem and keeping it under control will mean that it has returned to being a challenge. It may even happen that a particular crisis is completely resolved, but this is rare for global or widespread crisis events. We can therefore conclude that all events are interconnected and intertwined, and that each situation, if not dealt with swiftly and appropriately, can lead to or escalate into the next, and if handled correctly, can return to a less important situation. Take the example of a student with a poor grade in maths. He may see this as a challenge and correct the grade to excellent, but if he fails to do so, he could be in trouble and even face a personal crisis if he repeats the whole class because of the grade.

## 6. How do we know we are dealing with a crisis?

The fact is that poorly managed problems, issues, and less often also challenges can lead to a crisis. The first key difference between these three concepts and crisis is **urgency**. Normally, problems,



issues and challenges do not require urgency like a crisis. They usually involve time to assess all the options and make informed decisions. On the other hand, a crisis requires, above all, quick decisions, and urgent actions.



The second key difference is **impact**. Problems, issues, and challenges certainly have an impact. It can also be a very bad one. But it is rarely as critical or at least as widespread and potentially devastating as in crises. The third key difference is **time**. While problems, issues, and challenges typically last for merely hours up to a year (in cases of prolonged disease, mourning periods, complex business situations, etc.), crises always have a clear start and end. And what is also typical for crises is that they often involve the **possible threat** of death, disease, injury, or social and economic degradation. The other three concepts do not involve that directly or the likelihood is significantly more improbable. The huge difference is also with the **emotions**. When a person is dealing with a crisis they feel uncertainty, especially at the beginning. The emotions they face are mostly fear, anxiety and dread. These feelings are compounded by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Panic and denial are also very common. So overall the feelings that a person experiences when faced with a crisis are much more intense and negative than those when faced with problems, issues, or challenges. However, these feelings and emotions can be, and often are, experienced when dealing with problems, issues, and challenges, only the severity, longevity and permeability of such emotions is less.

## 7. What types of crises exist?

Most often, we associate crises with natural disasters or personal negative events. But crises can occur in different areas. We will learn about the five most common types of crises.



### 7.1. NATURAL CRISIS

Natural crises are one type of crisis and mostly include tornadoes, droughts, earthquakes, floods, hailstorms, hurricanes, forest fires, air/sea disasters, famines, extensive damage caused by emissions and pandemics. Most of the time, we talk about natural crises as natural disasters that happen. And they can be land based (earthquakes), water-related, atmospheric (tornadoes), biological (pandemics), extra-terrestrial based (comet strikes) or any combination of all these.

All natural disasters are very dangerous and can cause loss of life, major damage to people and their property, have a negative impact on the economy and distribution to daily life. They cause immense hardship to all living beings. This kind of crisis can lead to endangered species, which affects the modernity of the natural environment. Also, after a natural crisis, roads, infrastructure, and energy sources are often damaged, so there may be a shortage as a result. They can also act as triggers for social change, and, as such, increase the risk of violent civil conflict.

Natural crises, such as droughts, floods and others are also often the result of misused technology or social conflicts. But they are certainly more predictable than other types, such as socio-political crises.

The best way to understand natural crises and their consequences is through real-life examples that can occur at any time. Some of these examples include earthquakes, tornadoes, and pandemics such as Covid 19.

## 7.2. MANMADE CRISIS

A manmade crisis is the result of human error or a manmade product. This kind of crisis is triggered by consequences such as war, repressive regimes, the application of various sanctions, and poor economic and social policies. A person or a group of people has political objectives, but they trigger a whole series of negative consequences, and in this sense, crises of this kind arise. Crisis caused by a human are most often the result of state actions. This type of crisis includes transport events (plane crashes, major traffic accidents), collapse of manmade structures, major fires, terrorist attacks, technological and technical accidents (nuclear accidents) and wars.

Manmade crisis triggers human suffering, especially for poorer groups. The consequences include immediate deaths (war), destruction, displacement of populations, threats to food production, water quality, various diseases, and famines. A man-made catastrophe seriously endangers the economy and health system. It hinders the development of society. Those consequences can be immediate or lead to social distribution over time.

Such crises are increasing or growing rapidly as technologies evolve. Compared to natural crises, manmade ones can be even more dangerous because they are extremely unpredictable and unknown, except for war.

## 7.3. SOCIO-POLITICAL CRISIS

Social and political characteristics are at the centre of socio-political crisis. Such crises are events that consider international affairs or in particular international crises that cause disputes between countries. The main characteristics of this type of crisis are the limited time of the rescue, the threat to the fundamental human values, military operations and the crisis that includes the whole country. Civil unrest, protests, discriminations, insecurity, and terrorist acts are also part of socio-political crisis. This type of crisis threatens peace, security, a person's life, and property.

## 7.4. ECONOMIC CRISIS

The economic crisis means a drastic fall in the country's economic performance, mainly through falling output, rising unemployment, and bankruptcies. All of this leads to high levels of poverty in the country. So, in general, an economic crisis means a deterioration in a country's economic

situation. Imbalances in the economy are most often caused by external shocks such as war or natural disasters. This shock can be short-lived or persistent, with major consequences for the economy. But this type of crisis can also be caused by systematic failures or human behaviour. An economic crisis is a crisis that happens slowly.

When an economic crisis occurs, there can be a collapse in production, severe and prolonged unemployment and uneven price rises or falls. All of this has huge negative consequences - poverty, recession, negative impact on lifestyles, people losing jobs and work, wages falling, businesses closing, bankruptcies. This type of crisis affects a person's wealth and income. As a result, all aspects of social life are affected.

In many cases, an economic crisis causes panic among the population. People are withdrawing money from savings accounts and selling their assets. Asset values are falling, and people and businesses are unable to repay their debts. If the crisis is not resolved quickly, it will turn into a recession or economic depression. This in turn, lowers the standard of living for the whole population.

## 7.5. PERSONAL CRISIS

A personal crisis is a feeling that a person has, when faced with a sudden and unexpected situation. It is an event or series of events that represent an obstacle or change in an individual's life or in the achievement of their goals. Confusion, anxiety, and agitation set in, to the point where you are unable to deal with the situation properly. Is very dangerous when a person becomes overwhelmed by anxiety and pain and adapts negatively as a result.

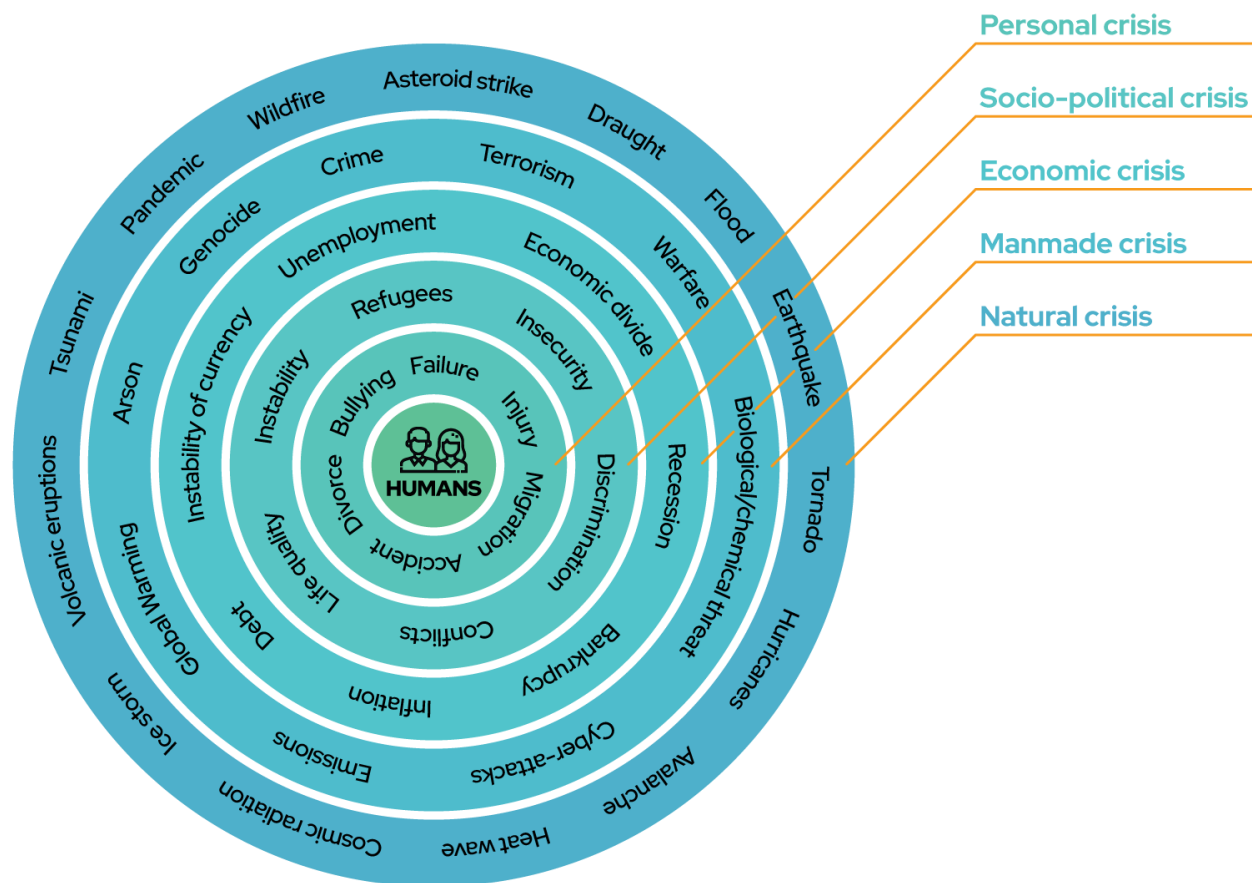
A personal crisis is linked to family crisis as well as financial, political, and economic instability. This type of crisis often arises when personal and economic insecurity collide. All of this causes fragilities in relationships. Both family and personal crises are always stressful. They presuppose a change, and most of these are stressful for the individual.

There are three common types of personal crisis: developmental crisis - as part of the process of development and growth through the different stages of life, existential crisis - internal conflicts (midlife crisis) and situational crises - sudden, unexpected crises resulting from accidents and events.

The person in crisis feels anxiety, confusion, anger, feelings of inadequacy, shame, guilt, and fear. Examples of personal crises are divorce, changes in relationships, housing, social relations, migration, house robbery, traffic accidents, natural disasters and so on.

Everyone faces personal crises at some point in their lives. But a personal crisis can mean something different for almost everyone. Anyway, we have described this kind of crisis with the most common examples, events that many people encounter in their lives.

## 8. Levels of crisis



The figure shows the severity of different types of crises. In the biggest circle (outermost circle) are the crises that are the most serious, the most threatening to humans, and the most widespread. Moving towards the centre of the circle, the lesser threatening crises to human civilisation are displayed, and those that are the smallest in scale - usually affecting just a small group of people (e.g., family, friends, etc) or only a single individual.

### 8.1. SEVERITY: HIGH

It is not surprising that we find war, pandemics, and nuclear accidents in the biggest circle. These crises are the most terrible, because they affect the most people and have a high chance of the worst outcome - death and long-lasting implications. We know that war is one of the greatest

threats that can happen. Many people are killed, neighbourhoods are devastated, people lose everything they have - their homes, jobs, families, safe shelter. Throughout history, we have learned the horrors of war, the many years of humanity's recovery from them, and that is why they are ranked the highest. It is the same with pandemics and nuclear disasters. Pandemics also cause many deaths and make people feel threatened because they never know when the disease will strike them or their loved ones. They also feel threatened by the measures in place when we face pandemics. A nuclear accident is also an accident that causes a huge number of serious illnesses, burns and deaths. After such an accident, life is turned upside down for quite a few years.

## 8.2. SEVERITY: MEDIUM

Tornadoes, air crashes, earthquakes, terrorist attacks are ranked in the next circle. Tornadoes and earthquakes are natural disasters that also threaten people, but the death toll is slightly lower than in a war, for example. They wreak havoc on nature, cause severe destruction, and destroy people's homes and possessions. Statistics on survivors of air crashes do not show high results, which is why these crises are also very severe. As there are always many air passengers, many people are affected. Terrorism, or the terrorist attacks that do happen, also usually affect a few people and the consequences are never good.

The first two sections (the two outermost circles) of the graph include natural disasters and man-made crises.

Recession and bankruptcy are ranked a "step" lower. Here, people are mainly affected financially. This causes psychological distress, as they do not know how they will support themselves and their families. People lose their jobs in these crises, but we cannot talk about deaths. These are fewer than in the crises mentioned above, and few people here die, for example, of starvation. A recession affects a relatively large number of people, while bankruptcy affects a slightly smaller number - usually employees of the company going bankrupt, who lose their jobs as a result. An economic crisis, which we classify in this rank, is therefore less threatening to people than a pandemic or a war, which are ranked highest.

## 8.3. SEVERITY: LOW

Socio-political crises ensue. They pose a particular psychological threat to individuals. Discrimination, inequities in society, strict regimes, exclusion from society - these are examples of crises that are of course dangerous for individuals, but not life-threatening. They usually affect small groups of people, but not necessarily. We rank them lower in terms of threat level because they are not life-threatening, nor do they threaten a person's livelihood or food supply, destroy their property, etc., but rather threaten their rights (e. g. black people) in society and the way they live in society (e. g. strict regimes restrict individual freedom).



Everyone may face different crises, and different personal crises are differently threatening for different individuals. Personal crises are ranked with the lowest severity, not because they are not important, but simply because they affect the fewest people at the time and have the smallest impact on the wider environment. This is not to diminish the importance of individuals, but as per definition, a crisis is a widespread event, affecting the magnitude of people, rather than one individual.

#### 8.4. CLARIFICATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION

Each type of crisis ranked in the graph could be ranked differently - higher or lower - in different situations. If a small magnitude earthquake happens and it does not collapse any buildings or injure anyone, it is barely felt, it could almost be ranked the lowest. And if we count under migration, for example, the migration that took place during the Ukraine war, when millions of people fled their homeland, this type of crisis would certainly rank much higher. The severity of a crisis is defined by the circumstances in which it occurs and the number of people it affects. The graph therefore represents a broad division of crisis severity, which is bound to change depending on situations and circumstances.

The ranking of crisis types does not mean that a crisis with lower severity is less important, but that it affects fewer people and thus, from a global standpoint, it has a smaller impact on human society.

Each type of crisis is perceived differently. The moment a person is faced with a personal crisis, such as a severe school failure, bullying, rejection by friends, negative grades, divorce, to name just a few, it is a very big crisis for them. But it still affects a small number of people, or just an individual, much less than, say, a pandemic. Personal crises are therefore no less worthy, no less difficult, and challenging, but they are ranked lower simply because of the number of people they affect.

The fact is that when we face a crisis, it is of enormous importance to us, it takes a huge amount of time and energy, and no crisis is negligible or insignificant. When an individual problem, difficulty or challenge escalates into a crisis, it is as much or more of a problem for that individual as a crisis that engulfs the whole world.

## 9. Importance of crisis awareness

People should be able to recognise when a crisis occurs, if for no other reason, then because it can be a life-threatening situation with extremely negative and severe consequences typically extending beyond any individual. Crises are a major threat to people, prosperity, and important values. They are an unpredictable phenomenon that represents major changes, high uncertainty, and complexity for humans. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that people can prepare for it and that they can react to it. Crisis requires urgency, which is why it is so important for people to be aware when a crisis is coming, especially to prepare themselves to react and find solutions quickly.

When a crisis occurs, people and the media react differently, and confusion can quickly arise. The fact is that in crisis situations, people who are distressed and frightened receive and process information differently than they normally do. Panic sets in and people's first reaction is to fight or flee. Panic can also trigger feelings of anger, burnout, frustration or overwhelm. People can have a mental breakdown very quickly. It is also the media that usually encourages and deepens these feelings. At the time of the Coronavirus, it was the media that instilled fear in people by reporting on the number of people infected and the daily death toll. It was the same with the war in Ukraine, the whole world was waiting for Russia's next move day by day, causing great stress and anxiety for the people.

Effective communication during a crisis is crucial as the public is strengthened to feel empowered to act. This can reduce the risk of major damage. Crisis communication is often characterised by asking people to do something, even though it may not seem necessary or meaningful at the time. For example, when we are threatened by an earthquake or indoor-fire, people have to evacuate, often without knowing why. Changing people's minds during a crisis can be crucial. And it is important that people do not stick to their routines but are willing to change. The key is to find some middle ground between the extremes - between the flood of information and acting on our own gut feeling, and to focus only on the right information.

When a crisis occurs, people think by acting. They are at risk of experiencing severe forms of stress and negative emotions. Our ability to cope with the situation depends on our own awareness of the crisis. Furthermore, our personal reactions and responses when faced with a crisis determine which way the crisis will go. Psychological barriers that come from negative emotions can hinder cooperation and the response to the crisis itself. Overwhelming feelings of dread, stress, anxiety, and anger interfere with our cognitive process, commonly making the situation worse.

On the other hand, strengthening positive feelings is linked to a successful outcome of the crisis. Before facing a crisis, it is important to build a sense of strength, to develop new risk-management skills, and find capacity to grow and develop. Therefore, it is extremely important that people are aware of the high likelihood of the crisis manifestation in a worst scenario, that they are part of the crisis so that they can communicate, behave, and react properly. This can reduce harmful



behaviours during a crisis. Which means it can save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce the misery they experience.

## 10. How to act in face of crisis?

The fact is that we can never completely prevent crises because they are a powerful sum of actions, movements, and situations. However, we can act to resolve them, rather than waiting for someone else to do it for us while panicking and complaining about when they will pass. If we are prepared, it means that we will not run away from the crisis, but will, through appropriate communication and action, reduce the negative impacts of crises and try to prevent any threatening consequences. This means that it is very important to avoid quick reactions and reckless actions.

The best way to deal with a crisis is by being equipped with the right mindset, methods, and tools to deal and manage it. It involves the use of certain strategies designed to help manage sudden and negative events.

### 10.1. WHAT IS PREPAREDNESS?

Preparedness is the knowledge and capacity to effectively face, anticipate and respond to an imminent crisis or disaster. This means that people anticipate a potential crisis or disaster, cushion their impact, and try to prepare for and cope with the consequences effectively. It is extremely important that people and communities prepare and be prepared for hazardous events and situations that may occur, especially as fires, epidemics, floods, storms, etc. are expected to occur more frequently.

## 11. Building crisis preparedness

Crisis preparedness is one's ability to respond to a crisis and is derived from a crisis management field of knowledge. Crisis preparedness helps to prepare for potential crises and better cope with those that do occur. If practised, it becomes enrooted in one's mindset and can help guide the way they think about challenges, issues, and problems as well. Preparedness is always practised with the goal to minimise the disruption, impact and damage to the individual, the organisation or society as a whole. It most often takes place in three phases: pre-crisis, crisis event and post-crisis or recovery. People who practise crisis preparedness are much better situated to deal with these

problems than those that do not, and will, due to their mindset, typically be the ones who act upon the situation rather than freeze out.

Crisis does not need to be our greatest threat and stress if we deal with it in the right way. Crisis preparedness might not eliminate the crisis, but it goes a long way to resolving it more efficiently and, above all, to recognising it earlier. It is extremely important to recognise the signs, the signals, that a crisis may be occurring. The key to good crisis preparedness is the understanding of what an effective preparedness involves.

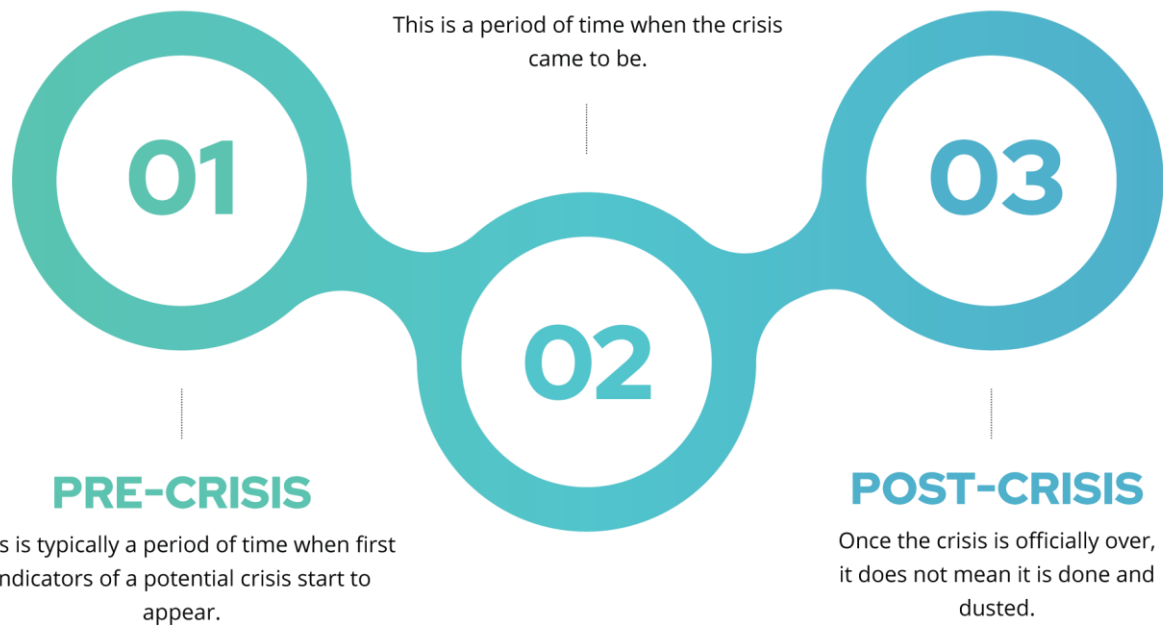


Let's start by highlighting that large situation such as crises are best not to be dealt with alone. Thus, finding and surrounding yourself with people with similarly proactive, positive mindsets is a good first step in any situation; regardless of whether you are dealing with a school challenge, community issue or any type of a problem. Mutual support and working together to find solutions are very important in challenging situations.

## 11.1. STAGES OF PREPAREDNESS

Crisis preparedness is characterised by different stages, each progressing to the next. Three of them are the most typical, and we will get to know them.

## CRISIS RESPONSE



### 11.2. PRE-CRISIS

The pre-crisis situation is the most important one. At this stage, we need to pay particular attention to the so-called crisis signals and crisis perception. The perception of the crisis in this period has a decisive influence on how the crisis will be dealt with in the following phases. At this stage, it is not only important to pay attention to the signals, but to pay attention to the right signals and the right information. Only with the right information will we be able to design the right measures to tackle the crisis. The pre-crisis situation is essentially about preventing a crisis from happening in the first place, and it is about being prepared for it, in the second place. It includes efforts to reduce known risks that could lead to a crisis. Preparation includes identifying and understanding signals that could lead to a crisis, developing a plan to be followed if the crisis occurs and conducting exercises to test and update the plan.

At the pre-crisis stage, a comprehensive list of all possible crises that could arise should be drafted. If failed to detect the right signals at this stage, or in time, then crisis events and all the negative consequences that entails will most likely follow. It is therefore extremely important to devote a significant proportion of time and attention to this phase. Proper communication and decision-making are key. It is important to involve more people to help identify and understand the potential signals and come up with countermeasures, and preventive as well as reactive actions. Communication is most important at this stage. It is necessary to identify all the objectives, principles, and methods of work. The plan will help us in all the next phases.

The key focus of this phase is also risk management. First, of course, risks need to be identified, and most people start at this stage to consider all the risks that may arise. It is mostly about identifying the risks and their levels, as we can only anticipate and prepare for them, while

preventing them altogether can be out of our control. It is important to involve people who have good knowledge and are qualified in the specific risk to find appropriate solutions.

In this phase, simulations are often carried out - “fake” situations or scenarios that appear to be the same as real ones. This helps to effectively test the measures, train people, and see if additional signals could be picked-up beyond the ones brainstormed while devising a plan. These plans are most often prepared in the form of short documents, which must be sufficiently in-depth and flexible for different circumstances, as well as regularly updated, especially if new circumstances appear.

### 11.3. CRISIS RESPONSE

After a crisis hits, the crisis response is the next phase. It is divided into three stages: (1) Alert, (2) Inform, and (3) Act and manage crisis situations. At this stage, the key point is that the crisis can no longer be prevented, it is happening, and the only thing we can do now is to act to solve it. This is the acute phase. The response and reactions must be swift and focused on solving the crisis. This is the most intense, but also, in many situations, the shortest phase.

Three things are key - being **fast**, **accurate** and **consistent**. Being fast means responding to a crisis immediately. During this time, we choose the plan we intend to implement according to the type of crisis we are facing. Then we run the whole phase according to the plan we have chosen and conceived. If necessary, the plan is changed as the crisis happens and evolves. Appropriate equipment and accessories must be used according to the plan. It is crucial that everyone involved is precise, consistent, knows all the facts and understands as well as communicates about what is happening. People are now taking action. How long this phase lasts depends entirely on the type of crisis being faced. In the case of a blizzard, this phase lasts only a few days; in the case of a hacker attack, a few weeks, or a month; or in the case of a pandemic or war, it can last for years. Everyone involved in executing the plan must work in a coordinated and cohesive manner.

As mentioned earlier, the crisis response phase goes through three stages. In the **alert stage**, it is necessary to identify and define what is the exact event that indicates the start of the crisis. In case of an earthquake - increased seismic movement underground, in case of a flood - large amounts of rain, and so on. It is necessary to identify which signals are really critical, and which only point to a possible crisis that may even not develop.

In the **information and action stages**, it is key to be informed as soon as an event happens and to recognise it as a disaster or crisis. When a problem arises, it is important to determine whether it is one that will resolve itself or one that needs to be addressed immediately. A situation is dangerous if it would have any negative impact on an individual, a group of individuals, an organisation or society as a whole. Recognising the severity of the problem is therefore essential to responding and acting on it. To act means to put the plan devised in the pre-crisis phase into

action. It is a response to an unusual, dangerous event that poses a significant threat to the natural order and/or humanity. The plan and all its procedures must be activated. This prevents further damage and protects everyone as well as reduces the impact of the crisis itself. All actions must continue, and people involved must act in a coordinated manner and always consult each other. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that all victims of the crisis are adequately helped, counselled on their physical as well as mental health, and protected (safe shelter, access to water and food, etc.).

## 11.4. POST-CRISIS

The post-crisis situation is the most important for members to reflect on how the crisis was dealt with, how the plan devised and executed went, what was learned, what could be improved, and to think carefully about actions taken or not taken. This is the stage to reflect, assess performance, the objectives achieved, to start planning for recovery from the crisis and, finally, to identify any recommendations for dealing with future crises. This phase marks the official end of the crisis. The acute phase is over, and the condition is slowly returning to normal.

During the crisis response phase, it is extremely important to keep a record of all impacts and to monitor actions. Only then everything can be analysed and evaluated at the post-crisis stage. It is also important to identify and define the cause of the crisis. *What is it that triggered the crisis in the first place?* The performance of everyone involved must also be evaluated. It is important to keep a kind of a diary that we can learn from and that can help us to cope with crises in the future. Based on the findings of the crisis we have faced, we are preparing some learning material for the future and changing or updating the plan.

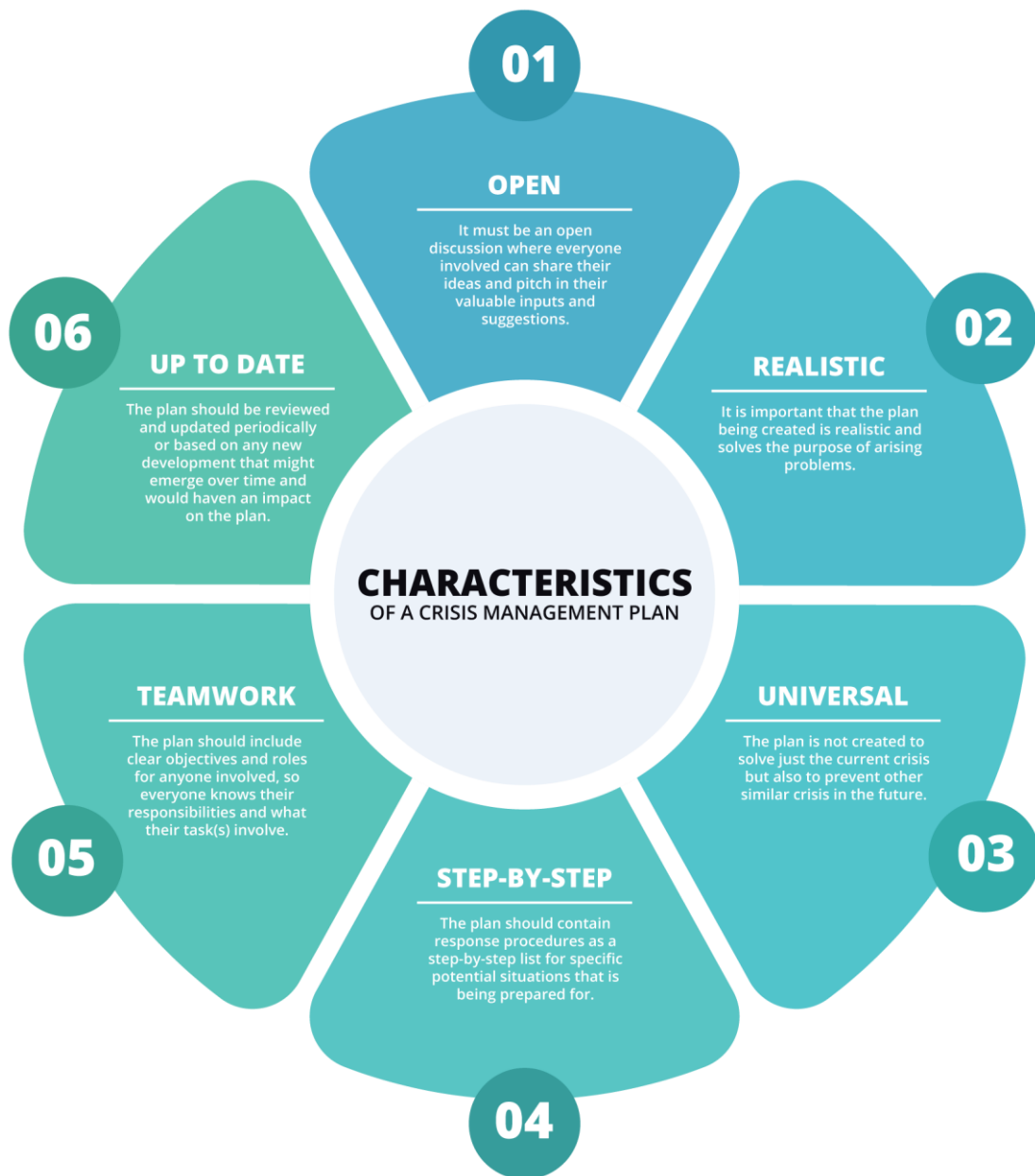
This phase is also known as crisis recovery. For example, damage to buildings and objects is assessed and repaired. In particular, we need to focus on the potential negative impact of the crisis on victims, their mental health and well-being. Additional assistance and protection must be provided to those most affected. The last stage of crisis preparedness is when we return to normal. Effective solutions will also be seen in practice, changing things for the better. If the plan and crisis management were effective, the responsible should be able to identify how to prevent similar situations from occurring, and if not prevent, then how to better mitigate consequences, while simultaneously working to maximise recovery and minimise damage.

## 11.5. THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Having a crisis management plan is crucial because without it, people under stress can make bad and uncoordinated decisions and may inadvertently prolong or worsen a crisis. In the aftermath of the crisis, the plan keeps everyone focused on the main priorities and combats the fear and uncertainty that can increase the damage. In addition, creating a plan helps to identify threats, reduce their likelihood, and improve the response. It helps to limit and mitigate the negative effects of the crisis. But it also reduces and shortens the impact of the crisis, protects all those affected, keeps things running and so on.



In the case of large-scale crises, organisations and states have very complex crisis management plans that include risk analyses, activation protocols, command centre, response action plans, communication programs, resources, training, and more. But crisis preparedness can also be a much simpler course of action that anybody follow and devise.



## 11.6. COMING UP WITH A PLAN

So, in order to realise the crisis management plan, we need people who will act in accordance with the plan we have prepared. It is necessary to schedule the tasks well. Once we have this done, it is necessary to consider all the possible risks that may arise. It is important that we do not focus on just one type of crisis that can happen, but that we plan for different situations that could be threatening. However, each crisis should have its own plan! For each risk that we have anticipated, it is necessary to identify possible triggers, results, consequences, and mitigation actions. Furthermore, a response, a measure to a specific type of crisis / risk should also be prepared. Also, it is not enough to simply understand the plan, but it rather needs to be backed up with actual elements. These elements are, for example, a map of the exit, in case of fire, contact numbers to

call in case of an earthquake, to have a safe room in case of an attack and the like. However, once we have a plan in place, it needs to be checked regularly and updated if needed. Because potential risks can change, and other types of crises can emerge over time.

Above all, it is important not to forget the plan, to keep it in mind, and to know where to find it. Even in situations that do not seem threatening or dangerous, it is important to always have a plan in place and to know when and how to use it. In non-crisis situations, we should not "relax" completely, but keep in mind how we can further improve the strategies we have in place to deal with a crisis if and when it occurs.

## 12. Crisis as an opportunity

Every crisis, for all its negative outcomes and consequences, can also be an opportunity. Although we never make the connection at first sight, it is a fact that every crisis contains both - the seeds of success and the roots of failure. It's not that a crisis is inherently good in itself. But it always mobilises people in some way to act on the new knowledge they develop in the face of the crisis, and in doing so to develop and create something that is important to them and that can improve or even help them when the crisis is over. In this sense, the crisis opens up new opportunities. Turning crisis into opportunity often requires new ways of seeing, thinking, and responding.

A look back in history quickly reveals numerous ways that crises have offered unexpected benefits for societies, countries, and humanity. Some of these include rapid problem solving and innovation, increased resiliency for the next event, systemic change (for the better), dramatic policy shifts, and so on. On a more tangible note, we also find early warning systems for nuclear dust spread, rapid testing for covid-19, numerous technological advances because of military and defence budgets and developments, many charities and solidarity organisations committed to help make the world a better place, and many more. The crisis as an opportunity depends on how people seize it. It always offers people the circumstances and the motivation, even a push really, to take a big step forward, but it depends on whether we can grasp it. Finding solutions to increasingly global crises, from terrorism to climate change to refugees, requires bold and creative crisis management. This is what can change the world for the better. The crisis offers opportunities for the further development of society.

But note **for an individual sometimes even greater courage and decisiveness is required to overcome a difficult personal crisis** - for example, the case of J.K. Rowling depression, which we discussed at the beginning.



## 13. Using doers' mindset to help society

In recent times, we have also seen cases where individuals have used their entrepreneurial "talent" to help society as a whole to cope with the crisis. Few examples of that are Zaščitimo Slovenijo, Greta Thunberg, movements The black lives matter, The rights of children to education, Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and so on. You can find more about each of these examples in the Appendix.

Identifying crises can lead not only to crisis prevention or mitigation but also to the improvement of the current state. More and more of our current frightening crises around the world could benefit from new approaches to dealing with such crises, where we tend to examine the state of the world as it is and what the solutions might be. Crises can be useful in terms of requiring new **changes to the system**. Wars can trigger the removal of the current regimes and the establishment of a new and better system. Crises also often act as a kind of forcing mechanism for rapid **innovation**, leading to rapid technological progress. Moreover, the measures taken during a crisis to survive and cope with it often **strengthen countries** and make them resilient to subsequent events. It also provides a push for establishment of new organisations that fight for better living, such as mental health initiatives, support groups, communities, etc.

### THE MESSAGE IS: YOU CAN DO THIS!

It is important to remember that the crisis is not the end of the world! The negative consequences of any crisis can be managed, prevented, turned into a positive outcome, or at least mitigated with the right approach. Knowing that we can get something good out of every situation - even a negative one - is a guideline worth remembering.

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