

MARRIAGE

Lesson 13

Workbook Assignment

Our Crisis

Overview

Most long-term marriages have experienced at least one major crisis that the partners had to work through together. Learning the skills necessary to cope with unexpected events that enter a marriage relationship can be the difference between a marriage that survives and one that does not.

Objectives

- ◆ Students will be able to identify four phases of coping with crisis.
 - ◆ Students will describe their crisis and write about the steps taken to deal with the crisis
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Vocabulary

crisis

Key Concepts

- Crises are significant unplanned events that occur.
 - Most long-term marriages have survived at least one major crisis.
 - The four phases of crisis are: 1) crisis, 2) confusion, 3) working through, 4) new beginnings.
 - Couples who have good coping skills work together to resolve the difficulty.
 - Marriages in which one or both of the partners do not have adequate coping skills are weakened or do not survive.
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Preparation for Lesson

The teacher will need:

- Video tape You Can Marry for Keeps
(order form for video at back of Teacher's Manual)
- **Crisis** game cards cut apart
- Bag or container for distributing the cards
- Workbook page *Our Crisis*

Teaching the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by telling the students that nearly all marriages will experience a crisis at some point. Whether or not a marriage survives the difficult time has less to do with the crisis and more to do with the partners' ability to work together to resolve the problem.

- Show the video You Can Marry for Keeps. Four couples are presented at varying stages of marriage. Each couple is dealing with a different situation that has impacted their marriage. Allow 30 minutes to view the video.
- After the video, point out to the students that the marriages represented on the film were successful because the partners were able to work through the problem. Ask the students to turn to the page *Our Crisis* in the workbook. The four phases of crisis are listed at the back of the lesson. Take time in class to go over each phase with the students.
- To give the students experience writing about the four phases of crisis, distribute the **Crisis** cards by having the students draw a "crisis" from the container. (Additional crises may be included by the teacher using the blank cards provided, or the students can be asked to write crises to use in this assignment). Students often ask if they can write about a crisis of their own choosing instead of drawing one from the container. Remind them that crises are unplanned events that occur. Individuals do not *select* their crises. It is more realistic to draw a game card. Give only one crisis per couple.
- Assign the *Our Crisis* worksheet as homework.

LECTURE NOTES:

Few individuals make it through life without having to deal with some type of crisis along the way. Life would be comfortably uneventful if we did not have to handle the unexpected. Unfortunately, crisis is very much a part of every day living. Some even feel that it is an important component for growth and development as human beings.

Crisis is an unexpected event that disrupts daily living in a significant way. How well one is able to manage the disruption and confusion of the crisis becomes a critical factor in the healing process. A minor crisis may affect one individual for a lifetime, while

another individual seems to recover from a major crisis within a reasonably short period of time.

When dealing with crisis, four phases have been identified: 1) crisis, 2) confusion, 3) working through, and 4) new beginnings.

Crisis: is generally considered to be a specific event that produces a temporary state of disorganization. For individuals who are experiencing a crisis, their usual methods of dealing with stress are not adequate to handle the new situation.

Confusion: is a period of emotional upset and disequilibrium in which the person feels unable to manage the problem. Whether a person begins to cope with the issue will depend on a) the severity of the problem, b) the person's internal ability to cope with stress, and c) what kind of social resources are available to the person.

Working through: begins when the individual realizes that he/she will survive. The experience is seen as a challenge and the person begins to build on the experience.

New beginnings: develop when the individual is able to think about the event in new ways. His/her perception about the event changes. The event is no longer a roadblock, but has become integrated into the inner fabric of the person.

Other events, such as developmental changes or life transitions, that are not necessarily considered to be a crisis in and of themselves can produce feelings of crisis proportion for an individual. How an individual perceives the impact of a life transition will depend on its timing, intensity, duration, sequencing, and the degree of interference with other developmental events (Slaikeu).

The **Crisis** game cards for this lesson have been adapted from the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe (1967). In this scale, life events are listed in order of degree of intensity and have been given a numerical value. Based on the scale, individuals who accumulate a value of 350 or more in one year would experience a feeling of crisis. For the purpose of the project, numerical values have not been assigned on the game cards. Students will receive "life events" that vary in intensity and are not in any particular order.

Dealing with crisis:

Phase 1 Crisis

Phase 2 Confusion

Phase 3 Working through

Phase 4 New beginnings

—Seligman, M. E. P. (1981). *Learned Optimism: A Handbook for Research and Research in*. Karl A. Sluiken, Allyn and Bacon, 1990.