

**“When You Say Crisis,
I Say Crisis, We Say
Crisis...”**

***Bridging shared language
as a collective renewal
strategy***

***The 2023 Summer Institute for
Educators: Healing Through Art & Ritual to
Sustain Ourselves and Each Other***

August 2nd 2023



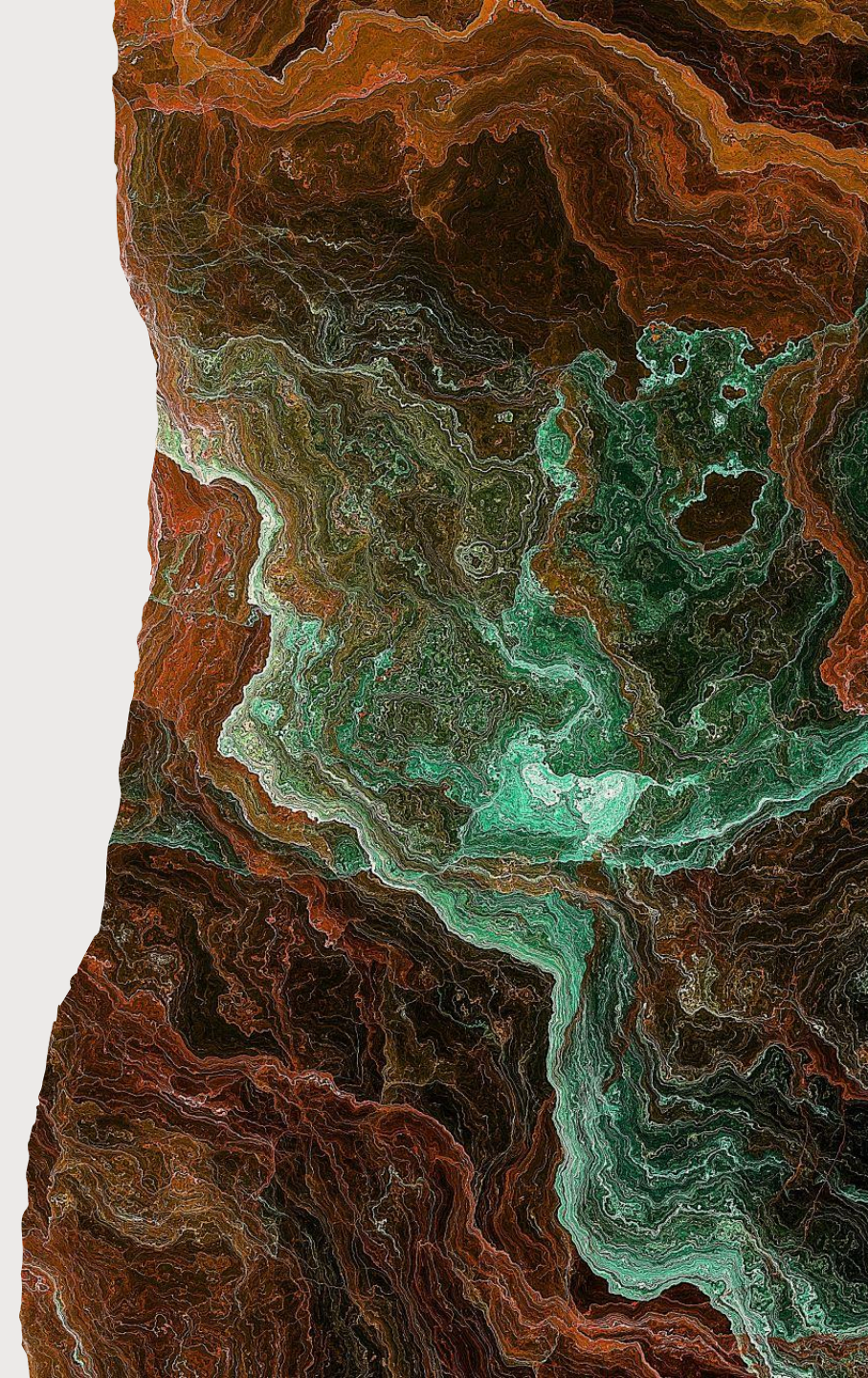


Sitting in the Sticky Stuff

Collective Renewal Suggestions: Crisis Me and Crisis We

Our Journey Today

1. **Why & How Shared Language = A Collective Renewal Move**
2. **Crisis Me: individual reflection and inquiry around your own relationship to crisis.**
3. **Crisis We: Creating shared language as adults in your school community.**
4. **Crisis We: Listening to the young adults // alumni and their experience of crisis response in the past.**



Why & how: shared language?


“Defining crisis, and naming traumas in expanded and ecological ways, is critical to our work insofar as naming has healing properties.

When we can say what feels unsayable, we are less likely to have it dragging us around by the nose.

Naming then becomes a form of affect identification and is rooted in ancient traditions of naming, marking, affirmation, and witnessing through community and ritual. The naming here is critical for evolving the trauma narrative into transformed, reconstructed meaning narratives.”

Jen Leland in School Mental Health Crisis Leadership Guide (Pacific Southwest MHTTC, 2020, p.12)

**When we say “crisis,” what
are we really saying?**



**Engage in *self
inquiry into
your own "crisis
bias" (gulp)***

PRACTICE #1

**Take a moment to pause:
what does crisis mean to
you, and why?
How does something
become a crisis, and why?**

“Many times, when we help we do not really serve...Serving is also different from fixing...

Seeing yourself as a fixer may cause you to see brokenness everywhere, to sit in judgment of life itself. When we fix others, we may not see their hidden wholeness or trust the integrity of the life in them. Fixers trust their own expertise.

When we serve, we see the unborn wholeness in others; we collaborate with it and strengthen it.

Others may then be able to see their wholeness for themselves for the first time.”

— Rachel Remen

**How might this
idea of “fixing”
versus “serving”
relate to our
collective crisis
renewal work?**

Signs

Tired, Heaviness
Focus on the past/loss
Regret, Guilt, Shame

Racing heart, hard to sleep
Hard to focus; worried
Overwhelmed, panicked

Tense muscles
Focus on what's unfair
Frustration, Resentment

Gateway Feeling

SADNESS:
Helps you address loss
and heal

ANXIETY:
Helps you protect yourself
against threat

ANGER:
Helps you defend yourself
and make things right

Root Causes

What have I lost?

What do I fear?

**How have I been
violated?**



What is your personal relationship to crises?

How might that impact your professional relationship to crisis management and grief sensitive leadership?



What is your relationship...

To ambiguity?

To loss of control?


**To threat, a loss of regularity, and
normalcy?**

(and where does that come from?)



How might you describe your relationship to information?

Needing it? Relaying it? Receiving it?



***Collective inquiry into
a whole
group/team/county/
school's experience
and relationship with
crisis to create
shared language***

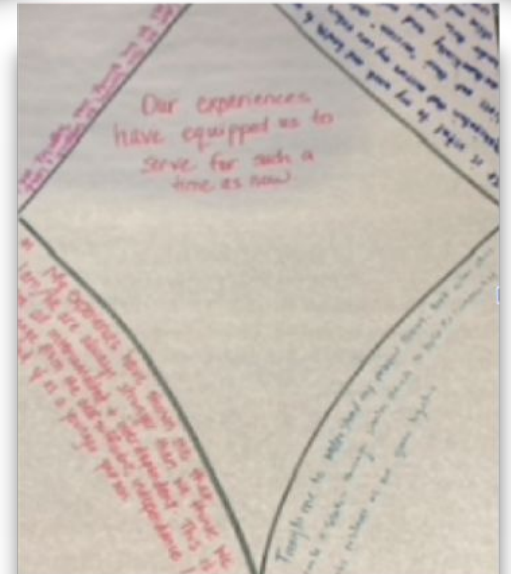
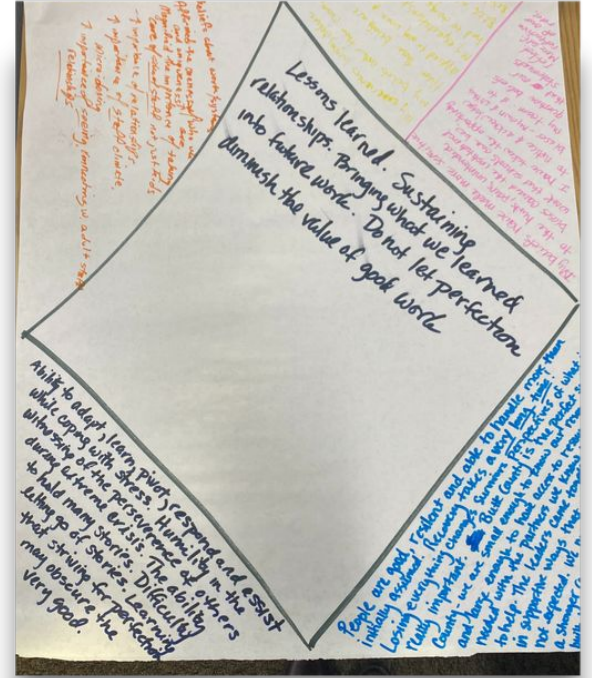
**PRACTICE
#2**

Diamond 1: Self

How did /does/ might your experiences of surviving crisis change your beliefs about you, your relationships, your communities, and the world?


Diamond 2: Community

How did /does/ might your experiences of surviving crisis change your beliefs about your work (relationships with colleagues or students), [your place of work], and the community you are a part of?



Collective “Crisis We” statements included:

- 1:** “Everyone carries their own hardships and experiences. We can imagine beyond where we’ve been. Leaders who are vulnerable create safety for others. Healing occurs through communities where bonds are created. Healing is not linear and is ongoing.”
- 2:** “Our experiences have equipped us to serve for such a time as now.”
- 3:** “Value work and impact. Crisis highlights gaps and silos. Shared humanity and voice breaks them down.”
- 4:** “The role of people in the form of colleagues, relationships, and family are all centered as things that have changed. Relationships are now a necessity to do our work. We recognize that the experiences of our youth provides us with a better understanding of the true impact of our crisis and the way forward. Our colleagues need to include young people.”
- 5:** “Lessons learned. Sustaining relationships. Bringing what we learned to future work. Do not let perfection diminish the value of good work.”



***Listen to alumni and
student voice to drive
what crises we value
and whose healing
we center.***

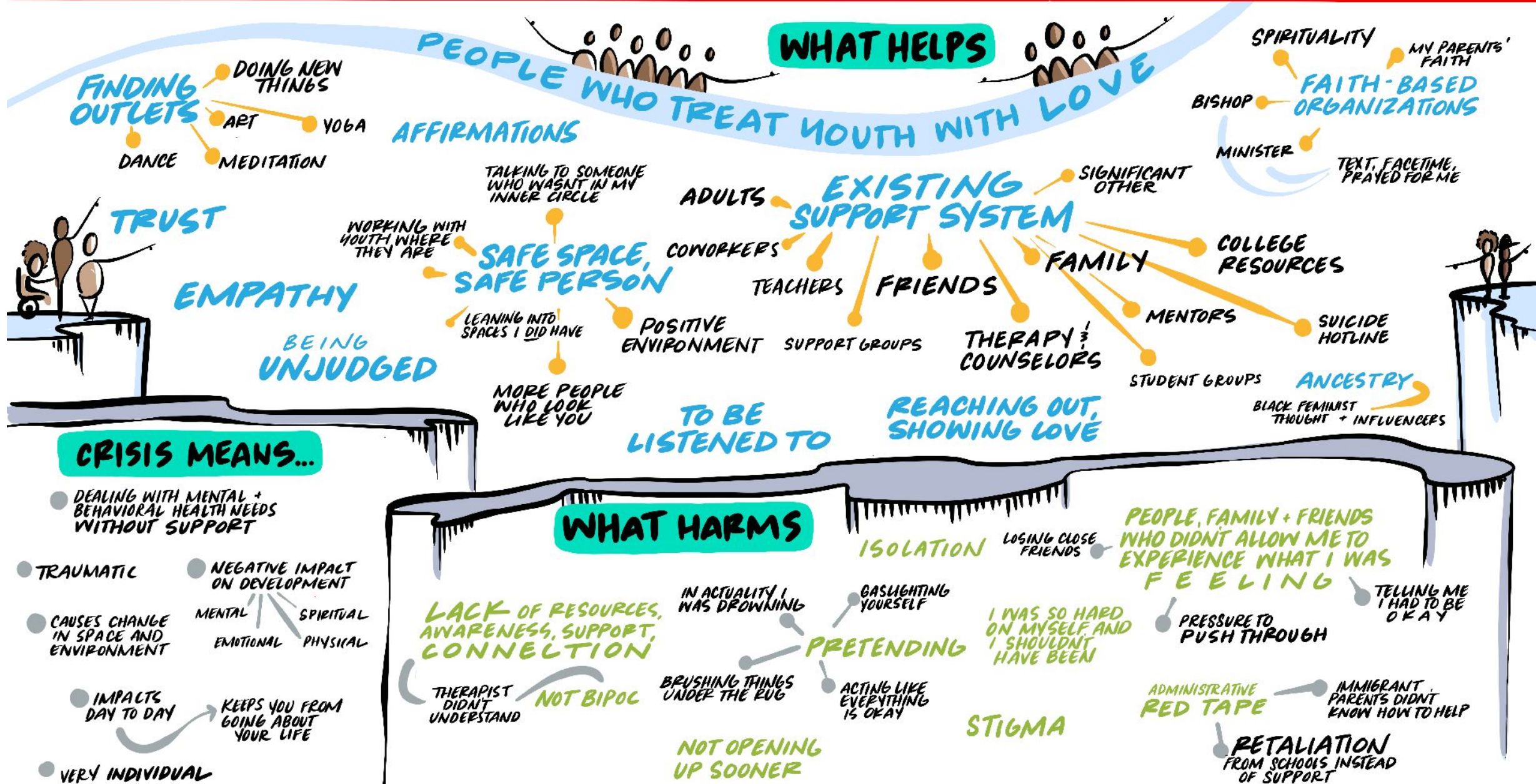
PRACTICE #3

What might harm and help young people as they navigate[d] school-based crises?

The following eight questions guided the listening sessions:

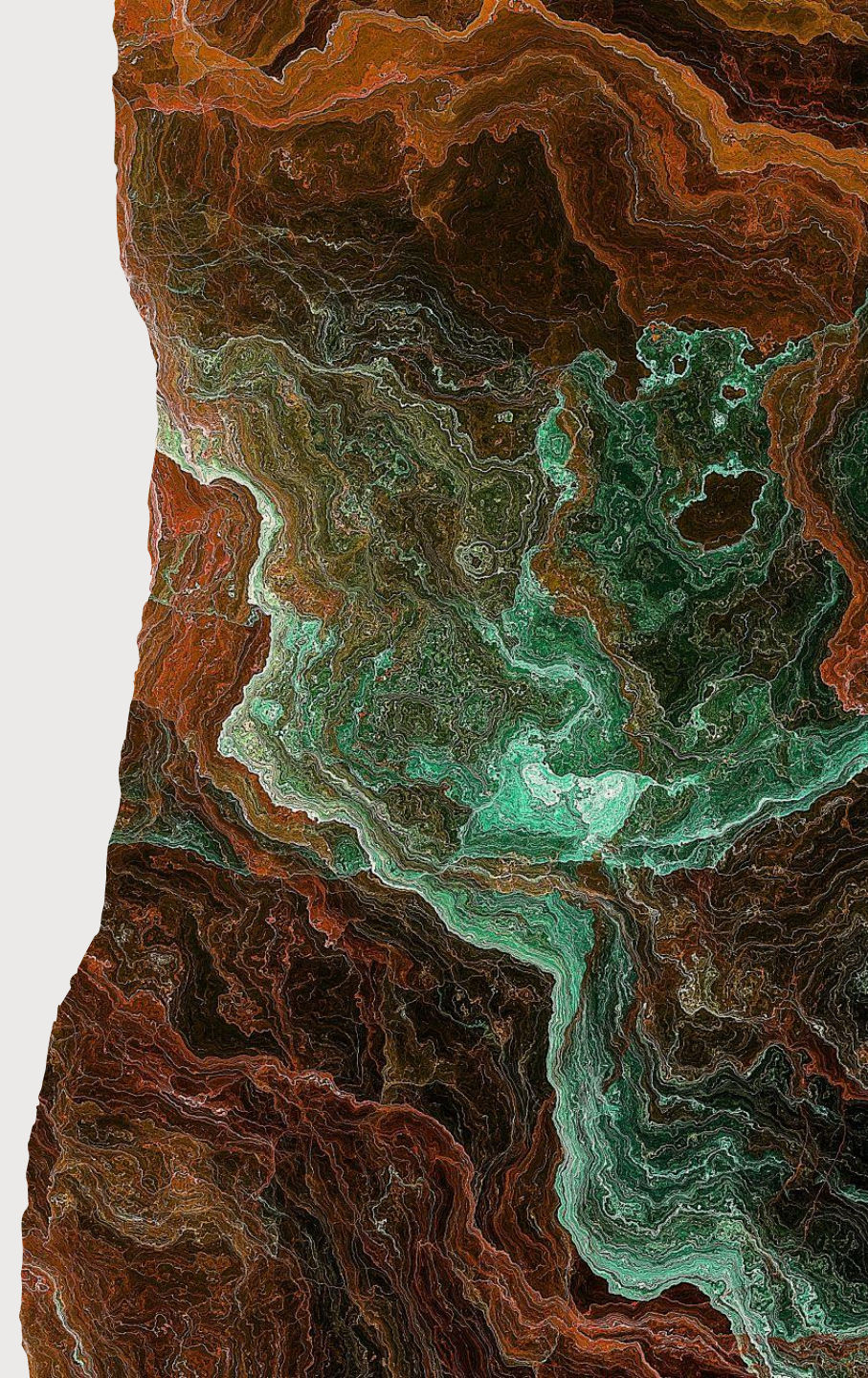
1. **How would you define crisis in your terms?**
2. How do you think a school administration defines and handles crisis?
3. **What did crisis look like for you?**
4. What has helped and harmed you in your recovery and renewal process after a crisis occurred?
5. Did you reach out for support? If yes, who did you reach out to?
6. How can schools support youth after crisis? What helps and what harms?
7. How can communities better support youth after a crisis? What helps and what harms?
8. How can providers support youth after a crisis occurs? What helps and what harms?

LISTENING SESSIONS ON SCHOOL CRISIS AND RECOVERY



Collective Renewal Suggestions: Crisis Me and Crisis We

- **Invest in individual reflection and inquiry around your own relationship to crisis.**
 - What does that relationship sound like? Feel like?
 - Where and how did that relationship evolve?
 - How might your relationship to crisis help others or harm others?
- **Invest in creating shared language as adults in your school community.**
 - How might your individual definitions of crisis merge into a collective one?
 - How might that collective definition of crisis guide your practices and policies (and how you recover and renew)?
- **Invest in listening to the young adults // alumni and their experience of crisis response in the past.**
 - How might student voice alter the way the adults in the system value which crisis to prioritize?
 - Which student voices (read: the ones we marginalize the most!) should be the anchor of our crisis definition work?



Let our lives be a practice ground where we're learning to generate the abundance of love and care we, as a species, are longing for....commit to developing an unflappable devotion to yourself as part of an abundant, loving whole.

Make a commitment to five people to be more honest with each other, heal together, change together, and become a community of care that can grow to hold us all.

*When we drop fear, we can draw
nearer to people, we can draw
nearer to the earth, we can draw
nearer to all the heavenly
creatures that surround us.*

- bell hooks

References

- Hattie, J. (2012). Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning. Routledge. New York, NY.
- Maté, D. G. (2019). When the body says no: Exploring the stress -disease connection. VERMILION.
- [School Mental Health Crisis Leadership Lessons: Voices of Experience from Leaders in the Pacific Southwest Region](#) (Wolf-Prusan & Schonfeld for the Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, SAMHSA, 2020)
- [Creating Trauma-Informed Policies: A Practice Guide for School & Mental Health Leadership](#) (Wolf-Prusan for the Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, SAMHSA, 2019)

Crisis:

A situation (e.g., a traumatic change) that produces significant cognitive or emotional stress in those involved in it.

<https://dictionary.apa.org/crisis>

Crisis [categories]:

Death of a student, a staff member, or a community member whose death affects a significant portion of the school population;

Major environmental crisis, such as a flood or fire;

Situation that involves a threat to the physical safety of students, such as a school bus accident, even in the absence of injuries; and

Situation that involves a perceived threat to the emotional well-being of students.

- [Office for Victims of Crime \(Schonfeld & Newgass, 2003\)](#)

Crisis:

A school crisis is when a community member or an influence outside of the system acts upon a group to cause harm or destabilize the community.

Oftentimes, not only does a crisis take us by surprise, but it also alters how the community can hold one another.

Kelly Knoche, former founder of The Teaching Well

Long term (renewal!) crisis reflection questions

1. What underlying assumptions were flawed? Which were confirmed?
2. **For whom did our crisis responses most benefit? Least benefit?**
3. What have we learned from how we (and potentially others) engaged in rapid-response funding strategies and practices?
4. What did we learn from our responses and reactions?
5. What are the lessons learned and principles of effective practice that will position us to respond effectively to a future crisis?
6. How did we alter our assumptions because of this experience?
7. What changes should we make as a collective to prepare for future crises?
8. What and how can we share with our community about what we have learned?
9. **What will we remember from this experience? What do we want to remember?**