



Crisis Prevention Planning (CPP) – Tips

General

- The CPP focuses on preventing future crises (not responding to crises once they occur).
- Crises may include danger to self (suicide attempts) or to others (e.g., aggression, property destruction).
- It can be helpful to have kids and parents work on this activity separately at first, but it is important to get everyone's input when creating a final version.

Triggers

- Focus on triggers that are specific to the crisis or crises being addressed (do not include triggers for irritation or minor difficulties)
- Clarify triggers, get specific. ("Being told 'no'" -> "Being told I can't go out with my friends when there is an important event"; "Homework" -> "A major long-term project is due, I am way behind and at risk of not passing.")
- When kids/parents are having difficulty identifying triggers/warning signs, you can help them by exploring exactly what led up to the most recent crisis/crises.

Warning signs

- Draw as much as possible from past/recent crisis situations.
- Ask: "How will you know when the safety plan should be used?"
- Ask: "What do you experience when you start to think about suicide or feel extremely depressed?"
- List warning signs (thoughts, images, thinking processes, mood, and/or behaviors) using the patient's/family's own words.

Parent/caregiver strategies

- For many kids, this will include giving them space until emotions cool off; parents may need to exercise their own coping strategies to stay calm or walk away to avoid escalating the situation further. (It is recommended that problem-solving not occur during a state of heightened emotion/escalation, but that parties return to discuss how things could be resolved/go better next time after emotions return to baseline, and within about 6 hours.)
- When there is suicidal risk, you may need to negotiate strategies parents can use to non-intrusively keep an eye on the youth (e.g., teen agrees to leave bedroom door open a crack so parents don't have to disturb him in order to verify safety; teen agrees to respond to texts within a certain time frame indicating he is safe, otherwise the parent will check on them).
- You may explore what forms of support or checking in are best received by the teen (e.g., a supportive text vs. repeated verbal questioning).

- Try not to encourage parent behavior that clearly reinforces the teen's crisis behavior (e.g., withdrawing limits in response to aggression); in these situations it may be important to promote desired alternative behaviors (e.g., by setting clear expectations, decide on meaningful rewards for compliance with expectations).

Youth coping

- Draw on existing coping strategies/healthy activities, and/or suggest new ones.
- Assess how likely they are to actually use these when needed. Identify potential obstacles, problem-solve.

Who to call

- Typically helpful to include a crisis support line (teens may feel more comfortable calling a line staffed by teens).
- Include mental health providers if involved and appropriate.
- Include several supportive adults or friends, in case some are not reachable.
- Evaluate the likelihood the youth would actually call these contacts in a time of crisis. Consider role-play/rehearsal to increase chances of follow through.
- Make a plan for these numbers to be available/accessible when needed (e.g., enter in phone; keep numbers in places they might be needed).

Making the environment safe

- Learn about any suicide plans and remove lethal means.
- Secure/remove dangerous/lethal materials (firearms, knives, sharps, cleaners, OTC and prescription medications) in the home to reduce the likelihood that passing, impulsive thoughts would lead to lethal outcomes.