

CHAPTER 6

Crisis Planning

Noticing and responding to symptoms early reduces the chances that you will find yourself in crisis. But it is important to confront the possibility of crisis, because in spite of your best planning and assertive action in your own behalf, you could find yourself in a situation where others will need to take over responsibility for your care. This is a difficult situation, one that no one likes to face. In a crisis you may feel like you are totally out of control.

Writing a clear crisis plan when you are well, to instruct others about how to care for you when you are not well, keeps you taking responsibility for your own care. It will keep your family members and friends from wasting time trying to figure out what to do for you that will be helpful. It relieves the guilt felt by family members and other caregivers who may have wondered whether they were taking the right action. It also insures that your needs will be met and that you will get better as quickly as possible.

A crisis plan needs to be developed when you are feeling well. However, you cannot do it quickly. Decisions like this take time, thought and often collaboration with health care providers, family members and other supporters. Over the next few pages, I will share with you information and ideas that others have included on their crisis plan. It will help you in developing your own crisis plan.

The crisis plan differs from the other action plans in that it will be used by others. The other four sections of this

planning process are implemented by you alone and need not be shared with anyone else; therefore you can write them using shorthand language that only you need to understand. But in writing a crisis plan, you need to make it clear, easy to understand, and legible. And while you may have developed other plans rather quickly, this plan is likely to take more time. Don't rush the process. Work at it for a while, then leave it for several days and keep coming back to it until you have developed a crisis plan that you feel has the best chance of working for you. Collaborate with health care providers and other supporters on developing this plan. Once you have completed your crisis plan, give copies of it to the people you name on this plan as your supporters.

Over the next few pages, I will share with you information and ideas that others have included on their crisis plan. It will help you in developing your crisis plan.

On the next tab write Crisis Plan. Insert several sheets of lined paper.

Part 1— What I'm like when I'm feeling well

The first step in this process is describing what you are like when you are well. Of course your family and friends know what you are like. But an emergency room doctor may think your ceaseless chatter is a sign of mania when you have been talking since the day you were born and will probably be talking from your grave. Or perhaps you are usually quite introverted. An unsuspecting doctor may see this as depression. Poor decision making or mistreatment could occur.

In the first section write words or phrases that describe what you are like when you are well.

Descriptive words might include:

talkative	laid back
quiet	retiring
outgoing	intellectual
withdrawn	humorous
adventurous	sensible
cautious	practical
outspoken	energetic
reserved	pale
ambitious	

Part 2— Symptoms

You may find that this is the most difficult part of developing your crisis plan. Describe those symptoms that would indicate to others that they need to take over responsibility for your care and make decisions in your behalf. This is hard for everyone. No one likes to think that anyone will ever have to take over responsibility for them or their care. And yet, through careful, well developed descriptions, you stay in control even when things seem to be out of control.

Allow yourself plenty of time to complete this section. When you start to feel discouraged or daunted, set it aside for awhile. Ask your friends, family members and health care professionals for input. However, always remember that the final determination is up to you. It may take several months to complete this section.

Be very clear in describing the symptom. Don't try to summarize. Use as many words as it takes to describe the behavior.

Your symptoms might include:

- unable to recognize family members and friends
- incorrectly identifying family and friends
- severe pain
- inability to control body functions
- high fever
- unusual skin tone
- unconscious or semi-conscious
- uncontrollable pacing, unable to stay still
- very rapid breathing or seeming to be gasping for breath
- severe agitated depression where unable to stop repeating very negative statements like "I want to die"
- inability to stop compulsive behaviors like constantly counting everything
- catatonic-unmoving for long periods of time
- neglecting personal hygiene
- not cooking or doing any housework
- extreme mood swings daily
- destructive to property (throwing things, etc.)
- not understanding what people are saying
- thinking I am someone I am not
- thinking I have the ability to do something I don't
- self destructive behavior
- abusive or violent behavior
- criminal activities
- substance abuse
- threatening suicide or acting suicidal
- not getting out of bed at all
- refusing to eat or drink

On your crisis plan, list those symptoms that would indicate to others that they need to take responsibility for you and make decisions for you.

Part 3 – Supporters

The next section of the crisis plan lists those people who you want to take over for you when the symptoms you list come up. They can be family members, friends or health care professionals. When you first develop this plan it may be mostly health care professionals. But as you work on developing your support system, try and change the list so you rely more heavily on family members and friends. Health care professionals are not consistently available. They move on to other positions. Using natural supports is less expensive, less invasive and more natural.

Have at least five people on your list of supporters. If you have only one or two, they might not be available when you really need them eg. on vacation, sick. If you don't have that many supporters now, you may need to work on developing new and closer relationships with people by going to support groups, community activities and volunteering. (See "Tips for Developing a Support System" in the appendix.). But for now, list those supporters you do have.

Following are some examples of attributes people want from those who take over and make decisions for them:

responsible	calm
honest	compassionate
sincere	understanding
knowledgeable	trustworthy

You may want to name some people for certain tasks like taking care of the children or paying the bills and others for tasks like staying with you and taking you to health care appointments.

When you list them, you may use the following format:

Name	Connection/role	Phone number
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There may be health care professionals or family members that have made decisions that were not according to your wishes in the past. They could inadvertently get involved in your care again if you don't include the following:

I do not want the following people involved in any way in my care or treatment:

Name	Why you do not want them involved (optional)
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Many people like to include a section that describes how they want possible disputes between supporters settled. For instance, you may want to say that a majority need to agree, or that a particular person or two people make the determination in that case. Or you may want some organization or agency to intervene on your behalf.

Part 4 – Medication

List the name of your physician or physicians and your pharmacy along with their phone numbers and any allergies you may have.

List the medications you are currently using and why you are taking them.

List those medications you would prefer to take if medications or additional medications became necessary and why you would choose those.

List those medications that would be acceptable to you if medications became necessary and why you would choose those.

List those medications that should be avoided and give the reasons.

Part 5 – Treatments

There may be particular treatments that you would like in a crisis situation and some that you would want to avoid. For instance people have very strong feelings about electroshock therapy-both positive and negative. Let your supporters know whether or not you want this treatment. The reason may be as simple as "this treatment has or has not worked for in the past", or you may have some stronger reservations about this treatment.

You may have also found some complementary therapies that have helped as well as some that have not, eg. acupuncture, massage therapy, homeopathy. List those you prefer and those you want to avoid.

Part 6 – Home/Community Care/Respite Center

Many people are setting up plans so that they can stay at home and still get the care they need if they are in a crisis by having around the clock care from supporters and

regular visits with health care professionals. Many community care and respite centers are being set up around the country as an alternative to hospitalization where you can be supported by peers until your symptoms subside. Set up a plan so that you can stay at home or in the community and still get the care you need. You may need to talk with others about this and explore options that are available in your community.

Part 7– Treatment Facilities

Your supporters may not be able to provide you with the home, community or respite care. You may need a safe facility, you may be taking medication that needs to be monitored or you might prefer to take part in a program at a treatment facility.

Using your personal experience and information you have learned through your own research or through talking with others, list those treatment facilities where you would prefer to be hospitalized if that became necessary, and list those you wish to avoid.

Part 8 – Help From Others

What I need my supporters to do for me that would help reduce symptoms.

This section takes a lot of thought. You may want to ask your supporters and other health care professionals for ideas. What would really help when you are experiencing severe symptoms that would help reduce the symptoms?

Some ideas include:

listen to me without giving me advice, judging me
or criticizing me
hold me
let me pace
encourage me to move, help me move
lead me through a relaxation or stress reduction
technique
peer counsel with me
take me for a walk
provide me with materials so I can draw or paint
give me the space to express my feelings
don't talk to me (or do talk to me)
encourage me
reassure me
feed me good food
make sure I get exposure to outdoor light for at
least 1/2 hour daily
play me comic videos
play me good music, (list the kind)
just let me rest
keep me from hurting myself, even if that means
you have to restrain me or get help from others
keep me from being abusive to, or hurting others,
do whatever you have to do to keep me from
doing that

Include a list of things you need others to do for you, like feed the pets, take care of the children and get the mail, and who you want to do it.

Supporters may decide that some things would help that

would really be harmful. List those you have discovered through past experience or those you feel could worsen the situation. Some examples include:

forcing me to do anything
trying to entertain me
chattering
certain kinds of music
certain videos
getting angry with me
impatience
invalidation
not being heard

***Part 9 – When my supporters no longer need
to use this plan***

When you feel better your supporters will no longer need to follow this plan to keep you safe. Make a list of indicators that your supporters no longer need to follow this plan. Some examples include:

when I have slept through the night three nights
when I eat at least two good meals a day
when I am always reasonable and rational
when I am taking care of my personal hygiene
needs
when I can carry on a good conversation
when I keep my living space organized
when I can be in a crowd without being anxious

You have now completed your crisis plan. Update it when you learn new information or change your mind about things. Give your supporters new copies of your crisis plan each time you revise it.

There may be health care professionals or family members that have made decisions that were not according to your wishes in the past. They could inadvertently get involved if you don't include the following:

I do not want the following people involved in any way in my care or treatment:

Name _____

Why you do not want them involved (optional)

Name _____

Why you do not want them involved (optional)

Name _____

Why you do not want them involved (optional)

Name _____

Why you do not want them involved (optional)

Name _____

Why you do not want them involved (optional)

Settling Disputes Between Supporters

You might like to include a section that describes how you want possible disputes between supporters settled.

For instance, you may want to say that a majority need to agree, or that a particular person or two people make the determination.

Part 4 – Medication

Physician _____ Phone Number _____

Physician #2 _____ Phone Number _____

Pharmacy _____ Phone Number _____

List the medications you are currently taking and why you are taking them. Include the name of the doctor and the pharmacy.

List those medications you would prefer to take if medications or additional medications became necessary, and why you would choose those.

List those medications that would be acceptable to you if medications became necessary and why you would choose those.

List those medications that must be avoided and give the reasons.

Part 5 – Treatments

List treatments that help reduce your symptoms and when they should be used.

List treatments you would want to avoid.

Part 6 – Home/ Community Care/ Respite Center

Set up a plan so that you can stay at home or in the community and still get the care you need.

Part 7 – Treatment Facilities

List treatment facilities where you prefer to be treated or hospitalized if that becomes necessary.

List treatment facilities you want to avoid.

Part 8 – Help From Others

List those things that others can do for you that would help reduce your symptoms or make you more comfortable.

