



*A publication of the Association for Conflict Resolution,
a professional organization dedicated to enhancing
the practice and public understanding
of conflict resolution*

CRISIS INTERVENTION SECTION **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CRISIS INTERVENTION SECTION

February 2006

Dear Readers:

Congratulations to Crisis Intervention Co-Chair Tina Jaeckle, who has been awarded the following designations: Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress, and Diplomate, American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. Tina is also Board Certified in Emergency Crisis Response and Bereavement Trauma. For more information on Tina, go to the [Crisis Intervention](#) web page.

In this issue we're delighted to be able to bring you an interview with Dr. Maria Volpe, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Dispute Resolution Program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, who talks about her work on the simplicities of reversing destructive conflicts. She offers a fascinating and practical perspective on dealing with seemingly intractable conflicts. Ph.D. candidate Tony Gaskew submitted a piece on the culture of terrorism, which explores, among other things, the idea of seeing the foundations of terrorism through the lens of the "violence triangle," a construct that begins with direct violence as "the event that is intended to insult the 'basic needs of others'." We also have an article from lawyer/negotiator Delee from on dealing with emotions in negotiations.

Last month we had the opportunity to talk with the Chief of the New Scotland Yard Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Team and ask her some of the questions that our readers sent in. Although a number of them could not be answered for reasons of confidentiality, we hope you will find her views as interesting as we did. Finally, we hope that our "You Are There" Crisis Scenario will challenge you: it deals with a school shooting that took place in Florida only a month ago. If you had been there, what would you have done?

Part of the mission of the Crisis Intervention Section is to create a bridge between the knowledge and needs of the law enforcement community and those of conflict resolution professionals in other fields, so that the information might be mutually useful, and they may find occasions to work together. To help further this effort, our February issue includes an announcement of a crisis intervention training for laypersons interested in serving in an advisory capacity with law enforcement. The founding Chair of the Crisis Intervention Section, Dr. Mitchell Hammer, offers the training.

And now, a question for you. The field of Crisis Intervention is so varied, and covers so many sub-fields, that we have an enormous amount of information from which to choose for each issue.

So that we can ensure that your particular areas of interest are covered, would you take a moment to e-mail Co-Chairs Lynne Kinnucan (kinnucan@patriot.net) and Tina Jaeckle (tjaeckle@bellsouth.net) and let us know in what field you are involved (workplace, school, community, family, general interest, etc.), and what kinds of information you would like to see included here.

We look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,
Lynne Kinnucan
Editor

Interview with Dr. Maria Volpe

On December 15 of last year, Dr. Maria Volpe presented at the Humiliation Conference at Columbia University in NYC on "Conflict and Humiliation: The Simplicities of Reversing Destructive Conflict.". At our request, she agreed to talk about her work on long-term, intractable conflicts. To learn more about the conference, please [click here](#).

People often think that destructive conflict is defined by deadly violence. But there are long-term intractable conflicts that, though they fall short of physical violence, easily fall into this category in terms of how thoroughly they destroy the participants' health and well being. Parties in these conflicts have often masterminded every way of perpetrating emotional and mental violence: the humiliating, dreadful putdowns, backstabbing, and destruction of reputations ... ongoing hurts, both intentional and unintentional, that undermine trust and confidence and have serious physical as well as emotional effects. It is common for parties to begin to experience physical symptoms like migraines, ulcers and rashes, or to go into therapy. In short, they talk about how sick they are and how much they hate the other party.

During years of listening to the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness in these situations, I have come to believe that there could be a real benefit to breaking down the complex concepts that mediators use into simple steps that the parties themselves can use once they leave the mediation session .

It is important to listen carefully to the parties when we ask, "What next steps would you like to take to move on?" This can often be something as simple as the parties asking, "Can we agree to say good morning to each other?" Even though this is a small step, in countless situations I have found that such a simple action is the beginning of actually helping to reverse the destructive conflict situation the parties have experienced for years. People who have not talked to each other for years, who did not even think of saying good morning to each other, gained confidence in knowing that they could figure out how to re-establish relationships.

To further move the parties along, it is important to work on how to avoid future destructive conflicts. Here again it is a matter of thinking through the simplicities of what it would take to reverse what they have been doing. Our task is to help the parties to identify some of the simple things that they can say and to help them feel comfortable using them. After all, they have already figured out all the ways to humiliate each other; now they have to figure out how to deal with these humiliations as they inevitably, if sometimes unintentionally, will come up again. For example, how will they let the other party know that this is one of those instances that bothered them or where they felt put down? We can come up with complex processes, but when parties leave the table they need simple tips -- such as the 'ouch rule' -- to make talk work.

There is one additional step: anticipating and dealing with the role that allies and adversaries will play in future interactions, since in many instances they helped construct the dynamics of humiliation, and may continue to keep the participants apart. It is important for the parties to realize that although they themselves have gained a new understanding, their allies and adversaries are likely to continue to play their same roles. So, for the parties, their task is to think how they plan to alert the other players to the fact that they can also be a part of a constructive process, and to prepare these significant others for the changes they will see. This is important because the allies and adversaries are going to be surprised -- even thrown off balance -- to hear the parties, for example, saying good morning to each other, or affecting other small changes in what was previously a deadlocked stance.

It is also important for the parties to rehearse what they are going to say to their allies and adversaries. Part of this involves finding creative ways of letting them know what happened. Some parties use personal contacts, some speak to selected individuals, some use e-mails --- but whatever the method, the goal is to let people know (without revealing the details of the negotiations) what they could expect to see when the parties begin to interact under the new understanding.

Although thinking about simple steps has real benefits, it also presents real challenges. Framing the questions is one of them. Mediators need to be creative in finding ways to prepare the parties to move on after the mediation session. They also need to break down the complex concepts that they use and convert them into a form that the public can use. I think one of our critical tasks as mediators in long-term conflicts is to raise questions. They can be as simple as asking, "What are you going to do when someone says something to irritate you?" or "How will you respond when someone does something unintentionally that hurts?" We can teach the parties how to paraphrase, starting with a simple phrase like, "What I hear you saying is xyz..." or show them how to become conscious of the need to select safe places to have a conversation, or become aware of timing, that this might not be the right time to speak.

Since it may be daunting for parties to remember how to manage potentially humiliating and destructive conflicts on their own, providing them with tangible reminders of how to make talk work can be very powerful. As part of its ongoing commitment to find more effective ways for the public to benefit from the work of dispute resolvers, the City University of New York Dispute Resolution Consortium has created Make Talk Work® bookmarks with simple messages drawing from complex dispute resolution principles and processes.

In addition to serving as Professor of Sociology, and Director of the Dispute Resolution Program at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, Dr. Volpe also serves as Convener of the CUNY Dispute Resolution Consortium, a university-wide center focusing on research and innovative program development. An internationally known scholar, she has lectured and written extensively about dispute resolution processes, particularly mediation, and has been widely recognized for her distinguished career in the field of dispute resolution.

Dr. Volpe also initiated the *Make Talk Work*® project, part of which is the *Bookmarks Project*, funded by a grant from the Judicial, Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) Foundation. It makes available to the public packets of 12 bookmarks with ideas and simple phrases that can be used in a variety of everyday conflict situations. More on the *Make Talk Work*® and the *Bookmarks Projects* [click here](#). Dr. Volpe can be reached via email at mvolpe@jjay.cuny.edu.

One of the primary goals of the Crisis Intervention Section of ACR is to develop and expand the intersection between the research, academic, and practical knowledge in this field. To become a well-rounded crisis intervention and negotiation practitioner, it is necessary to become educated on the various complex components that lead to the creation of crises. Terrorism, as a major crisis issue in our lives today, must be examined from all perspectives, particularly cultural. Tony Gaskew, a Ph.D. Candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University, submitted this article on the powerful role of culture, discourse, and historical significance of terrorism.

The Culture of Terrorism

By Tony Gaskew

Since the crimes of September 11th, 2001, it has become almost commonplace to debate the schisms in defining “terrorism.” According to Zulaika and Douglas (1996: ix) one of the primary disjunctions is the “use and abuse of terrorism discourse.” With over 100 definitions of terrorism being manufactured and disseminated across academia since the “regime de la terreur” of the French Revolution, maybe we should begin to refocus our attention on the “invisible histories” (Linstroth 2005: 9) behind the culture of terrorism, astutely understood by Chomsky (1988: 76) as the “success of violence.”

As 21st century practitioners of conflict resolution, we must remind ourselves that the perennial question central to understanding the crimes of 9/11 must always be “how did all this violence begin in the first place?” (Linstroth 2005: 16) In this unraveling, we must resist the antiquarian temptations of Orientalism (Said 1978) and reject the essentialist scribes of fundamentalism in order to understand the human element in the conflict and to examine the hegemonic relationship between violence, power, and imperialism within the culture of terrorism.

Exploring the hegemonic discourse of violence, Johan Galtung (1996: 1999) in his book Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization, examines the culture of terrorism within the confines of the “violence triangle”: direct, structural, and cultural violence. According to Galtung (1996: 40), direct violence is the “event” that is intended to insult the “basic needs of others,” and consists of the physical force and fear that define the foundation of terrorism. Structural violence is the systematic “process” of exploitation, oppression, and discrimination built within a social institution, which breed the violent terrorist prerequisites of alienation, humiliation, and social despair (Galtung 1996: 40). Structural violence involves demonizing and socially labeling a population, described by W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) in his timeless book The Souls of Black Folk, as the “problem.” Although Du Bois (1903) was referring to the indelible stigma attached to the historical discourse of African-Americans, the aftermath of September 11th and the regeneration of Orientalism would find a new face to mark this lurid social scar.

Cultural violence is the “invariant” exemplified by religion, language, values, customs, social experiences, and identity that “justify or legitimize direct and structural violence” according to Galtung (1996: 197). Benedict Anderson (1983) in his book Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism suggests that identity is so powerful a force that there are some people who would be willing to die and sometimes kill for it. Thus the violence triangle of direct, structural and cultural violence serves as a natural breeding ground for the culture of terrorism.

Noam Chomsky (1988: 1) in his book The Culture of Terrorism referred to the abusive right of power as “the Fifth Freedom.” Chomsky (1988: 1) describes the unique ability of the “powerful” to exploit, demonize, and dehumanize marginalized populations “to ensure the

existing privilege is advanced." Boulding (1990: 23) described this type of systematic threat as "destructive power." Thus, power provides a group with the ability to control the "history and memory" of an entire social era (Chomsky 2005: 92). In this nuance, power can be used to declare war, create and deliver political violence, and redefine the history of the "other" (Said 1978).

In his exquisite text The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon (1963) explores the culture of terrorism within the imperialistic relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. According to Dr. Mahmoud Mamdani, "imperialism serves civilizations by clearing inferior races off the earth." Fanon writes:

"Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together--that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler--was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons...The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world strewn with prohibitions can only be called into question by absolute violence."

Absolute violence becomes the ignominious language of imperialism where the marginalized become fluent translators of abysmal cultural destruction in order to incorporate their dreams of political emancipation. Therefore, the relationship between communities subjected to imperialism is sustained by and through the "cycle of violence" which becomes the perennial breeding ground for the culture of terrorism.

Only by closely examining the "invisible histories" behind the connectivity of imperialism, power, and violence can we permeate a clearer understanding of the root causes of the culture of terrorism, and face the perennial question faced by all conflict resolution practitioners: "how did all this violence begin in the first place"?

References

- Boulding, K. 1990. Three Faces of Power. London: SAGE Publications.
- Chomsky, N. 1988. The Culture of Terrorism. Boston: South End Press.
- 9-11. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Imperial Ambitions: Conversations on the post-9/11 World. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. The Souls of Black Folk. Dover Publications, 1994.
- Fanon, F. 1963. The Wretched of the Earth. London: Penguin.
- Galtung, J. 1996. Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization. London: SAGE Publications.
- Linstroth, J.P. 2005. "An Introductory Essay: Are we in the age of resistance in a post-9/11 world?" Peace and Conflict Studies, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1-54.
- Mamdani, M. 2004. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror. New York: Random House.
- Said, E.W. 1978. Orientalism. New York: Random House.
- Zulaika, J. and W. Douglas 1996. Terror and Taboo. London: Routledge.

Resource Corner

CRISIS NEGOTIATION TRAINING

Advising Critical Incident Command and Negotiation Teams: Using the S.A.F.E. Model.

Presented by: Consulting, LLC: co-taught by Mitchell R. Hammer, Ph.D. and Major Robert Beach.

Date: August 14-18, 2006

Location: Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy (Washington DC area)

This five-day program provides realistic training in critical incident management and negotiation and is designed for professionals whose expertise lies outside traditional law enforcement or military fields (individuals whose background may be in such areas as workplace violence, mediation, counseling, conflict management arenas).

The S.A.F.E. model is a framework for developing effective negotiation strategies to de-escalate and resolve crisis incidents. It is used to detect and measure indicators of a worsening situation and for reporting progress to command. The model can be employed to resolve a wide range of critical situations, from dealing with potentially violent employees, to domestic violence situations and barricaded individuals, to terrorist activities and international incidents.

During the first two days, participants will gain a realistic introduction to the basic concepts and skills of crisis and negotiation with an emphasis on assuming the important role of "S.A.F.E. Advisor" for crisis negotiation teams. During the final three days, participants will complete the "Using the S.A.F.E. Model in Crisis Incidents" program.

For more information on the training please visit the Crisis Intervention training web page at: <http://www.mediate.com/acrcrisisnegotiation/pg21.cfm>. An outline of the S.A.F.E. model will be featured in the next issue of the Crisis Intervention News.

Who Wants to Know

This following question came to us from Windsor, Ontario:

Q: I was wondering if you could give me some advice regarding Crisis Intervention and Negotiation. I have a major in psychology but have become very interested in the field of crisis intervention and would like to know more about what kinds of programs and training one would have to go through in order to take up this field. I know crisis intervention is often associated with law enforcement: is it necessary to become a police officer in order to go into crisis intervention or negotiation? Is a degree in Criminology a wise thing to consider if crisis negotiation is something that I want to pursue?

Dr. Maria Volpe and Mitchell R. Hammer, Ph.D., President of Hammer Consulting, LLC, both volunteered answers for this question.

Dr. Volpe:

A good foundation is to take courses in the mental health field -- clinical courses, courses that will lead to an MSW, etc. A field that has sprung into prominence especially following the 9/11

tragedy is dealing with communities in crisis, such as those communities affected very directly by the 9/11 tragedy or the recent coal mine crisis. People get left behind when these crises are immediately over, but the crises within the communities, the aftershocks, are many layered and can take years of healing. Getting involved with victim services agencies and domestic violence services are also good avenues for crisis intervention, as is working with school personnel or workplace EAP officers. It's not necessary to take courses in criminology unless you are going to be working with law enforcement.

Dr. Hammer:

The question is excellent as there are increasing numbers of people who are interested in either developing the skills of crisis intervention to apply to their diverse practices or obtaining a position in crisis intervention in law enforcement or outside of police hostage negotiation teams.

First, you do not have to have an advanced degree in clinical psychology or be licensed as a psychologist to work in this area. The area of crisis intervention and critical incident management has numerous positions available for working in crisis situations. For example, FEMA recently hired 25 conflict resolution professionals to work alongside critical incident management teams during crisis events such as natural disasters. Corporations and the federal government are actively hiring conflict resolution professionals in various "crisis mitigation" positions. What is important is that you have a degree in a social science field (e.g., communication, psychology, criminology) and some work experiences that involve individuals in crisis or situations where violence or the threat of violence is present. These work experiences can include suicide hotlines, domestic abuse shelters, etc. Finally, you should have training in conflict resolution and/or mediation, since these are the primary skill sets you will likely most rely on.

Critical incident management is the broader field in which crisis/hostage negotiation is situated. You might want to take some courses in this broader area. To this end, you could check out the online training offered through the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA. This NIMS training is offered to professionals both within and outside the federal, state, and local government sectors.

In the field of police hostage/crisis negotiation within the United States, one typically needs to be a sworn officer to function as a primary negotiator. However, you do not need to be a police officer to be a member of a police hostage/crisis negotiation team. In order to work directly with critical incident management response teams in law enforcement, having training in basic hostage/crisis critical incident management is helpful. In my own case, my organization offers individuals who are not currently attached to a police hostage negotiation unit this training so that they are better prepared to function in these kinds of volatile situations.

There clearly is a role for mental health resources in hostage negotiation, crisis intervention and critical incident management. This background is especially suited for helping individuals in psychological crisis and for providing mental health support to crisis response teams. However, a background in conflict resolution is particularly valuable in acting as an advisor to negotiation strategy, intelligence gathering, incident decision-making, and critical incident debriefing.

It's always helpful to gain as much academic background as possible in understanding human behavior under conflict, crisis and violence conditions. Remember, however, that you should supplement this by gaining work experiences in these areas at the same time, whether through volunteering at a suicide hot line or attaining an internship while in school in this area

The following article was submitted at the request of Co-Chair Tina Jaeckle, by author and negotiator Delee Fromm. It was first printed in "Negotiator Magazine" in 2005. Ms. Fromm is an attorney who has written numerous articles on law and psychology.

Dealing with Your Emotions in Negotiations

By
Delee Fromm

Negotiations, due to their nature, create and foster strong negative emotions. When individuals meet to promote their self-interests or where the past histories of the parties involved have been colored by acrimony, it is not surprising that emotions are more powerful than facts in determining the course and outcome of the negotiations. However, without emotions, it would be impossible for people to resolve important conflicts. Emotions motivate us to act and keep us working hard to settle differences. The problems emerge when we allow emotion to affect the way we negotiate. To negotiate well, we need to step back and see the big picture. We need to be able to view the issues and discussions rationally – to be able to balance emotion with reason. So how do we deal with emotions in a way that allows us to control them and, where appropriate, express them constructively?

1. Acceptance and Awareness. To be human is to feel and there is nothing wrong with having emotions. Accept that feelings are normal and natural. Often, however, we are unaware of our emotions. If we are unaware of what we are feeling then most likely we are unaware of the feelings of others. The hallmark of emotional intelligence, the single best predictor of success in life, is the ability to understand our own feelings and those of others. It is important to realize that feelings usually come in bundles – some are obvious and some are more difficult to find. In order to tease apart all of the feelings we may be experiencing, it is necessary to become familiar with the spectrum of feelings that are not as easy to discover – these include hurt, shame, fear, self-doubt, sadness, jealousy, and loneliness. Often we may suppress or deny our emotions – especially if they are feelings we do not like to admit having. However, suppression of feelings, particularly strong emotions, usually leads to leakage or bursts. They will come out, often in the most inappropriate way and at the most awkward time. Since our body is closely tied to our emotions, one way to become more aware of our emotions is to notice how our body is behaving. Headaches and aching muscles in the neck and shoulders may indicate panic, a tight chest may signal fear, a racing heart and sweating usually signal anger, and fatigue and slowed speech suggest sadness. By learning how our body reveals our inner emotional state, we can not only be more aware of what we are feeling but most likely will discover the onset of emotional states more quickly.

2. Dealing with Extreme Emotion. In general, when some feeling inside seems to be growing larger and out of control, naming or identifying that feeling internally will, by itself, tend to reduce the feeling and bring it under control. It also helps to be able to adopt the stance of a detached observer. This allows perspective to analyze the emotions and think of ways of dealing with them. It is important to note that even awareness and recognition of emotions may not be enough to control behavior. Due to the way the human brain works, sometimes very strong emotions, such as fear or rage, may lead us to act before we have consciously decided what to do. Most of our blood goes to our extremities when we experience anger – so although we are well prepared for a physical fight, our problem solving abilities will not be at their optimum, to say the least. If a person is able to avoid reacting immediately, buying some time is always a good way to deal with surging emotions. Some techniques for buying time include hitting an imaginary pause button or taking an actual physical break. The mental pause button can be triggered any time you start feeling uncomfortable or when heavy emotions are starting to surge. Common ways to take a physical break include a trip to the washroom or a break for lunch or

coffee. If a longer time period is needed, the negotiations can be halted and another meeting or telephone call scheduled later. This also permits the time to become a detached observer -- to figure out what we are feeling and why. Be aware that emotions are not fixed -- they can be changed by negotiating with them. Since our feelings are related to our thoughts and perceptions, we can change our feelings by changing our thoughts and perceptions. By changing the beliefs and information that underlie our thoughts and perceptions, we can shift our feelings. Hot feelings, which are less adaptable and rational, can be changed to cool feelings, which are healthier and less volatile. For example, anger can be changed to annoyance and irritation, depression to sadness, severe guilt to regret, and anxiety to concern.

3. Expressing Emotion. Once we are fully aware and have consciously recognized our emotions, we can decide whether to express them. Although there is nothing wrong with having emotions, expressing them in inappropriate ways can be damaging and counterproductive. If we decide to express our emotions to the other side -- we must express them appropriately. Don't vent. Be clear. Describe your feelings carefully. Don't attribute blame or judge-- just share. Try to relate the emotional tone to the substantive issue. Develop a range of expression -- from rational discussion to increasing emotional content to letting your emotions take control. Emotions provide important information to us and to the other side. If we are able to express our emotions in a constructive way and at an appropriate time in the negotiation, rather than destroying or hurting the negotiation process it can greatly enhance it.

4. Gender Emotion and Negotiation. As a woman it is important not to let your emotions show, especially when negotiating with men. In business emotional displays can hurt. A man who screams is considered a tough guy who merely lost his temper. A woman who screams is viewed as someone who cannot control herself. A man who cries is viewed with compassion (as long as it does not happen too often) whereas a woman who cries may be branded "overly emotional". To gain and keep the respect we need to negotiate on an equal footing with men in business, take a break and leave the room before showing any strong displays of emotion. Being rational at all times during a negotiation is highly prized in business and thus cool-headedness is the way to keep the respect we deserve and have earned.

Copyright © 2005, Delee Fromm, All Rights Reserved.

Editor's note: An excellent read in addition to this piece is "Crisis Intervention: Using Active Listening Skills in Negotiations", by Gary W. Noesner, M. Ed., and Mike Webster, Ed. D. You can find it in the FBI online library at: <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/leb/1997/aug974.htm>.

Interview with Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit of the New Scotland Yard

In our continuing effort to provide perspectives on crisis intervention from experts in different parts of the world, we recently we had the privilege of speaking with Detective Superintendent Suzanne Williams, Chief of the Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit at the New Scotland Yard. She also is the recipient of the prestigious Queens Police Medal for Distinguished Police Service.

The Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit was formed in response to the Spaghetti House and Balcombe Street Sieges, which occurred in 1975 and 1976 respectively. During the Spaghetti House Siege, gunmen held hostages in the cellar of a London restaurant for five days. The Balcombe Street Siege began when, after a shooting incident in Mayfair, gunman fled the police and then forced their way into a flat, taking a husband and wife hostage for six days. Both sieges ended peacefully.

Due to the nature of Det. Sup't Williams' work, there were some questions our readers asked that she could not answer.

What elements are important for a team of interveners or hostage negotiators?

In hostage negotiations, the role of rank in decision-making is critical, and must be distanced from the negotiators. Our negotiators usually have the rank of Inspector, at minimum, [but are not so advanced a rank that we then have two senior officers making decisions]. It's important for the negotiator to be a middle decision-maker, not the final one. It increases a negotiator's power to be able to put the blame upward when negotiating, and allows the negotiator more options in gaining time in working with the subject. Our negotiators have to be able to withstand the stress, both physical and mental. And you have to be a bit of a talker, looking for a hook, when you're talking to a hostage taker, but be a good listener when you're listening to a suicide. As we say, you do not talk people down, you 'listen them down.'

Are there any substantive differences, generally speaking, in training, focus, emphasis, etc., between English and American hostage negotiators?

No, not at all. They are very, very similar. We make an effort to make sure that they are, [trained the same way] especially since we frequently work side-by-side in international situations, such as some recent overseas incidents. We send two officers each year to the FBI Academy in Quantico, and they send four people to our hostage negotiation training. We have a very good working relationship.

If there is one difference, it is probably between the two national cultures: our culture is a little less gung-ho and less ready to go in tactically. For example, if we have a jumper, we will close the bridge until the situation is resolved. In one such situation, the London community was brought to a halt for 11 days. The primary objective is always to save the life, no matter how big a scalawag that person might be, and if that means holding up traffic, we'll do it. Public inconvenience is not our primary concern.

Crisis intervention and hostage negotiation books offer many examples of the unique challenges that negotiators face. Are there any in particular that stand out for you?

Two things come to mind. One of the most challenging situations I've dealt with in my work is negotiating with someone with schizophrenia. The trick is to deal with the illusion, but to not enter into it. For instance, you might say something like "I'm sure God is talking to you, but I can't hear Him." It would be worse if you pretended to enter in. And you need to make sure that you are not competing with the other voices in their head, that you don't become just another voice. Especially in these situations, we bring in professionals whenever we can.

Another challenge is dealing with negotiations overseas, because you are not dealing with just the subject: you're negotiating with local law enforcement, with diplomats, with companies, the family back home ... to name just a few. Abroad, all my police powers are left behind. In a sense, in these situations, you have all the power of a tourist.

[Editor's note: Lt. Jack Cambria, Commanding Officer, NYPD Hostage Negotiation Team, and a colleague of Det. Sup't Williams, added these thoughts on negotiating with schizophrenics]:

The only time the police become involved with schizophrenic individuals is when they become violent and demonstrate a level of dangerousness that makes them a threat to themselves or to others. In these situations the police, in addition to being law enforcement, must also act as

advocates for the mentally ill. Because they are not responsible for themselves, the police must then become responsible for them.

This involves two critical steps. First, once the person is taken into police custody, usually for transport to a hospital for psychiatric evaluation, it is mandatory that he or she be handcuffed. This becomes necessary because if a further violent episode occurs, someone could be injured. Second, it is imperative that the police carefully explain to the schizophrenic individual what has happened and why they have to be handcuffed. Continuous reassurance should occur throughout the custodial process, because if we don't do this, the individual may put their own interpretation upon what is going on and, in an attempt to protect themselves, enter back into their illusion and become violent once again.

It is an important part of our role as police to act as advocates of the mentally ill, both by protecting them from the consequences of their violent behavior, and by making them feel as safe and supported as possible in what has become a frightening and confusing experience.

A reader who teaches crisis intervention in London wanted to know if there are opportunities for disseminating any of your knowledge to non-police negotiators in the UK: for instance, those involved in high conflict, risky family situations.

No. The course that we conduct for law enforcement is limited only to that profession because it is funded by money from anti-terrorist groups. Candidates go through a very strict screening -- we do not even allow retired officers become involved in negotiations, although they may serve in other capacities in the team. In addition, going beyond the stated parameters would lead to insurance problems, legislation problems, etc.

[Editor's note: Law enforcement members of the ACR Crisis Intervention Section also asked about sharing protocols, standard operating procedures, training requirements for negotiators, etc. For the same reason, these also cannot be shared.]

What drew you to become a hostage/crisis negotiator?

For the same reasons I joined the police: to help people. But somehow along the way you get so bogged down in paperwork. Crisis and hostage negotiation takes you back to why you really joined in the first place: to make a difference.

Recommended Readings

Practical Concepts and Training Exercises for Crisis Intervention Teams, Potter, D., Stevens, J.A., and LaBerteaux (Chevron Publishing, 2003). Reviewed by Tina Jaekle.

This book provides a detailed and valuable overview of the critical incident stress management approach as the foundation for practical role-plays and interactive games. It is well written and can be utilized by all crisis professionals, including emergency rescue and law enforcement. This book also includes an invaluable CD with additional suggestions for advancement of crisis practice skills. The book is divided into five sections:

- Overview of the CISM field
- Tips on Operational guidelines for crisis teams
- The authors' favorites and tips and techniques for training

- Dozens of practice scenarios, some divided by population (including firefighter/EMS, law enforcement, school, and community groups)
- Collection of group exercises and educational games.

There are certain parts of this training manual that I found to be particularly beneficial for the field of crisis intervention. The role-plays and practice scenarios, presented in a systematic and realistic manner, allow for the assignment of certain traits and emotions during and following a critical incident. Below are examples of how each section is detailed.

The Incident: The crisis scenario is presented in detail with a description of all individuals and groups involved in the incident. This set-up provides the foundation for a more comprehensive examination of crisis issues and approaches in the fact phase.

Your Role: This details a specific role, including further details about the critical incident and how you have approached it as a role player.

The Fact Phase (includes three sections):

- **Thought Phase:** In the specific assigned role, your initial thoughts are detailed in order to better understand the progression of the actual crisis, and to include additional details of the reasons you are particularly affected by the incident.
- **Reaction Phase:** In the specific assigned role, your emotions and reactions to the critical incident are detailed in order to present a more realistic view of the wide psychological variations and effects involved in crises.
- **Symptom Phase:** In the specific assigned role, your physical and emotional symptoms are described. For example, you may be paralyzed by your grief and unable to concentrate.

In crisis intervention role plays, having these specific details is absolutely essential in order to create a realistic crisis approach. As a mental health practitioner, I highly recommend this book as an important resource in the training of crisis intervention and negotiation teams.

Editor's Note: We also have been browsing The Coward's Guide to Conflict: Empowering Solutions for Those Who Would Rather Run than Fight, by Tim Ursiny, Ph.D. Well-written and practical, it has chapter headings such as "Take the Coward Test," "How to Make Conflict Less Frightening...Quickly" and "The Role of Selfishness." In a chapter on dealing with fear, he includes a humorous account of his thoughts on trying to save face during a grueling experience in a sweat lodge, and turns the story into practical teaching. It's a good read, with good real-life tips that your clients may be able to use beyond the mediation table.

Crisis Scenario: You Are There School Shooting

Question: Based on this actual event, how would you assess and identify who will need crisis intervention?. What suggestions do you have for accomplishing this task?

On January 14, 2006, Chris Penley, a 15-year-old eighth-grader at Milwee Middle School in Longwood, Florida, was shot in the head by SWAT team member. He is expected to die from his wounds. His family plans to donate his organs.

In 2005, Chris threatened to blow up a school bus. In January 2006, he showed up for class with a pistol in his backpack. However, neither Chris' classmates nor a veteran Seminole County deputy sheriff knew the weapon was actually a pellet gun. The deputy had to make a split-second decision whether or not to shoot when Chris aimed the weapon at him.

Chris had reportedly told a student at breakfast in the cafeteria that he was going to beat up another boy -- later he was observed carrying a gun in his backpack. Minutes later, Chris told another student to tell the teacher he had a gun, and then he cocked it. The teacher picked up the phone and a chase with Chris and deputies ensued through the school. Chris ran into a bathroom and was confronted by Lt. Mike Weippert of the SWAT team. Although deputies pleaded with Chris to drop what appeared to be a 9 mm Beretta handgun, Chris aimed the gun at Weippert and the deputy fired once. The barrel on Chris' gun had been painted black making it virtually identical to the real thing.

The incident created chaos for students and parents as investigators were trying to figure out what prompted the boy's actions. After the shooting, hundreds of parents came to the school and many were frustrated and clearly anxious. What would you have done?