



# Treatment in Crisis Situations

Naomi Golan



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# Treatment in Crisis Situations

## **Treatment Approaches in the Human Services**

FRANCIS J. TURNER, Editor

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To Lydia Rapoport, 1923–1971

*Teacher, colleague, and friend who first stirred my interest in crisis intervention. By generously sharing her extensive knowledge and experience, her intense involvement in issues of practice and teaching, and her warm personal charm, she provided the inspiration for this work, both before and after her untimely death.*

# Foreword

“Treatment Approaches in the Human Services” is the first series of professional texts to be prepared under the general auspices of social work. It is understandable that the editor and authors of this endeavor should be enthusiastic about its quality and prospects. But it is equally understandable that our enthusiasm is tempered with caution and prudence. There is a presumptuousness in attempting to be on the leading edge of thinking and aspiring to break new ground, and our professional experience urges us to be restrained.

The first suggestion for this series came from the editorial staff of the Free Press in the spring of 1975. At that time, the early responses to *Social Work Treatment*\* were available. It was clear from the responses that, useful as that book appeared to be, there was a wish and a need for more detail on each of the various thought systems covered, especially as regards their direct practice implications. These comments led to a proposal from the

\*Francis J. Turner, ed., *Social Work Treatment* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

Free Press that a series be developed that would expand the content of the individual chapters of *Social Work Treatment* into full-length books with the objective of providing a richer and fuller exposition of each system. This idea is still germane to the series, but with the emergence of new thought systems and theories it has moved beyond the notion of expanding the chapters in the original collection. New thinking in the helping professions, the diversity of new demands, and the complexity of these demands have increased beyond the expectations of even the harbingers of the knowledge explosion of the early 1970s. No profession can or should stand still, and thus no professional literature can be static. It is our hope that this series will stay continuously current as it takes account of new ideas emerging from practice.

By design, this series has a strong orientation to social work. But it is not designed for social workers alone; it is also intended to be useful to our colleagues in other professions. The point has frequently been made that much of the conceptual base of social work practice has been borrowed and that social work has made few original contributions to other professions. That is no longer true. A principal assumption of this series is that social work must now accept the responsibility for making available to other professions its rich accumulation of theoretical concepts and therapeutic strategies.

The responsibility to share does not presume that professions with a healing and human-development commitment are moving to some commonality of identity and structure. In the next decade, we are probably going to see clearer rather than more obscure professional identities and more rather than less precise professional boundaries, derived not from different knowledge bases but from differential use of shared knowledge. If this prediction is valid, it follows that each profession must develop increased and enriched ways of making available to other professions its own expanding knowledge of the human condition.

Although the books in this series are written from the viewpoint of the clinician, they will be useful for the student-



professional, the senior scholar, and the teacher of professionals as well. On the principal that no dynamic profession can tolerate division among its practitioners, theory builders, and teachers, each book is intended to be a bridging resource between practice and theory development. In directing this series to colleagues whose principal targets of practice are individuals, families, and groups, we take the other essential fields of practice as given. Thus the community-development, social-action, policy, research, and service-delivery roles of the helping professions are not specifically addressed in these books.

One of the risks of living and practicing in an environment characterized by pluralism in professions, practice styles, and theoretical orientations is that one may easily become doctrinaire in defending a particular perspective. Useful and important as is ongoing debate that leads to clarification of similarities and differences, overlaps and gaps in thought systems and theories, the authors of these books have been asked to minimize this function. That is, they are to analyze the conceptual base of their particular topic, identify its theoretical origins, and explain and describe its operationalization in practice, but avoid polemics in behalf of "their" system. Inevitably, some material of this type is needed for comparisons, but the aim is to make the books explicative rather than argumentative.

Although the series has a clear focus and explicit objectives, there is also a strong commitment that it be marked with a quality of development and evolution. It is hoped that we shall be responsive to changes in psychotherapeutic practice and to the needs of colleagues in practice and thus be ready to alter the format of subsequent books as may be necessary.

In a similar way, the ultimate number of books in the series has been left open. Viewing current practice in the late 1970s, it is possible to identify a large number of influential thought systems that need to be addressed. We can only presume that additional perspectives will emerge in the future. These will be addressed as the series continues, as will new developments or reformulations of existing practice perspectives.

The practice of psychotherapy and the wide spectrum of activities that it encompasses is a risky and uncertain endeavor. Clearly, we are just beginning a new era of human knowledge and improved clinical approaches and methods. At one time we were concerned because we knew so little; now we are concerned to use fully the rich progress that has been made in research, practice, and conceptualization. This series is dedicated to that task in the humble hope that it will contribute to man's concern for his fellows.

It is particularly appropriate that Dr. Naomi Golan's book on crisis treatment is the first to be published in the series. First, it immediately brings to the foreground an international flavor, one of the goals to which the series aspires. Dr. Golan has skillfully intermeshed her teaching, practice, and research experience in the United States with her more recent experience in Israel and thus demonstrates that theories of human behavior, when soundly based, are transferable across national and cultural lines. This helps put to rest the frequently voiced challenge that our therapeutic activities are class, race, and nationally bound.

Second, Dr. Golan's book serves as an excellent example of an area in which social work has made a distinct theoretical contribution. Certainly, social work cannot claim to be the originator or indeed even the main contributor to crisis theory. As in many other areas, we have learned much from our colleagues in other disciplines about this important aspect of human problem situations. But we have done much more than borrow and learn; we have enlarged, enriched, and made more precise some of the conceptual bases of crisis understanding as well as the scope of strategic and effective intervention in a growth-enhancing way.

That social work has been particularly interested and competent in distinct crisis situations is not surprising. Crisis has always been a part of the purview of social work practice, although it has not always been recognized as such. Indeed, once practitioners became clearer about the nature and diversity of crisis situations

and thus about the relevance of these concepts for their own practice, there was a danger that crisis theory would become the sole theoretical base for some practitioners. Such overenthusiasm has now passed. Nevertheless, crisis concepts continue to be most helpful for all practitioners as a way of understanding what is happening to many people and learning how to intervene effectively in situations that a few years ago would not have been handled so sensitively. Dr. Golan has made a major contribution to practitioners both in explicating a basic practice model and in applying it to different aspects of crisis phenomena.

A third aspect of the timeliness of this book relates to our current life realities. As we become increasingly aware and accepting of the reality that as members of the family of man our lives and fates are closely interrelated with those of others, we are beginning to learn that the crises of other people and groups are in some ways our own. Crisis is a part of our daily living. When it is recognized and dealt with properly, our functioning can be facilitated and enhanced; when it is not recognized and appropriately handled, we can become debilitated and incapacitated.

In an exemplary way, Dr. Golan's book captures the depth and breadth of the concept of crisis. She presents an excellent analysis of its historical development in other disciplines and a companion analysis of its development in social work. She examines the many-faceted manifestations of crisis as they occur developmentally, situationally, or as large-system disasters. Of particular interest for social workers is her exposition of how crisis theory can enable us to help the victims of large-scale disasters involving many people. Apart from a few social workers whose practice is directly related to providing services in such situations, few of us have had a theoretical understanding of what happens in these circumstances and hence how to be most helpful. Dr. Golan's excellent discussion of this component of social work practice represents a major contribution to the literature.

In addition to the content, the extremely rich bibliography represents an excellent resource that will be much appreciated by practitioners and scholars.

Thus, this book makes an important contribution to the professional literature. It is an incisive presentation of the current state of psychotherapeutic treatment in crisis situations that provides an authoritative resource to practitioners in virtually all types of settings.

FRANCIS J. TURNER

# Acknowledgments

The decision to write a book about crisis treatment can, in itself, become a hazardous event. Throughout the various phases of preparation, this situation often appeared on the verge of erupting into states of active disequilibrium. That I was able to cope with the various threats and challenges and finally bring the book to completion was due in large measure to the active networks of colleagues, friends, fellow workers in the field, and, above all, my patient, forbearing family, who all combined to provide support and encouragement throughout the process.

To all of these helpers, my heartfelt thanks.

NAOMI GOLAN

Haifa, 1977

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## **Part 1**

# Theoretical Framework



