Crisis (hostage) negotiation: current strategies and issues in high-risk conflict resolution

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Abstract

Crisis (hostage) negotiation has been described as the most significant development in law enforcement and police psychology over the past several decades. This paper reviews three primary components of crisis negotiation: (1) the incorporation of crisis management and intervention in current broad-spectrum approaches to crisis negotiation; (2) the Behavioral Change Stairway Model (BCSM), constructed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Crisis Negotiation Unit (CNU), that provides a systematic, multistep process directed toward peaceful, nonlethal resolution of critical incidents; and (3) role-playing as a vital tool in the assessment and training of crisis negotiation skills. Advancements and limitations in the field of crisis negotiation are highlighted; suggestions for directions that future work in this area might take are offered.
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Contents

Law enforcement agencies have been employing negotiation strategies in their responses to hostage/barricade situations, kidnappings, personal crises, and other critical incidents since they were first introduced by the New York City Police Department in 1973. This trend followed the debacle of the 1971 Attica, New York prison riot, and the murder of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. Since that time, several models of negotiation have been developed for use in hostage situations, based primarily on problem-solving approaches to response, management, and resolution of these incidents (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Lanceley, 1999; McMains & Mullins, 2001; Webster, 1998a). However, problem-solving strategies have proven effective only subsequent to addressing and defusing the subject's emotional state; and this appears true regardless of the situation (Noesner & Webster, 1997; Rogan, Hammer, & Van Zandt, 1997; Romano & McMann, 1997).

This paper discusses current strategies in crisis (hostage) negotiation that have been developed and implemented to facilitate: (a) the transition of a hostage or non-hostage critical incident from a state of high emotionality (crisis) to rationality (problem solving), and (b) the eventual peaceful or nonlethal resolution of the crisis situation. Following an overview and definition of key terms, we review three primary components of the crisis negotiation process: (1) crisis management and intervention in the context of critical incidents, (2) the Behavioral Change Stairway Model for achieving conflict resolution, and (3) utilization of role-play procedures to train requisite crisis negotiation skills.

1. Overview and definitions

Police organizations have historically emphasized problem-solving training for their negotiators. Illustrative are the four tenants of Fisher's et al. (1991) negotiation model that have enjoyed widespread application in this area: (1) separate the person from the problem, (2) focus on his or her interests rather than positions, (3) generate options, and (4) establish clear objective criteria for behavioral change. For years, this model was adopted for hostage negotiation by law enforcement organizations across the nation (see McMains & Mullins, 2001).

Even the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) focused on problem-solving strategies for negotiators until 2000. At that time, the FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit (CNU), at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, conducted research that illustrated the need for change and modification of the curriculum for their National Crisis Negotiation Course (NCNC). Their work examined data from the CNU's Hostage Barricade Database System (HOBAS). HOBAS is a post-incident database that collects and stores case information from law enforcement agencies nationwide and now contains over 3800 hostage/barricade incidents. Their research revealed that over 90% of all reported critical incidents were, in fact, non-hostage, crisis situations (Flood, 2003). Consequently, the NCNC curriculum was modified to emphasize a broader range of *crisis intervention* strategies and tactics.

1.1. Hostage vs. non-hostage situations

Considerable confusion currently exists regarding the differences between hostage and non-hostage situations. *Hostage situations* involve the taking of a person captive for "instrumental" or tangible reasons; the suspect needs the police or other authorities to meet specific demands (e.g., ransom, transportation, money). In these events, the captive is used as leverage to obtain other substantive goals. For example, foreign nationals holding prison guards captive in exchange for the release of political prisoners, money, and transportation would constitute an actual hostage situation. In a *non-hostage situation*, a person is taken captive for "expressive" or intangible reasons; he or she does not need the police or other authorities. In these situations, the captive is held by a subject who is in a highly emotional state (e.g., anger, jealousy, frustration), usually as a victim or "homicide-to-be". Examples

of these scenarios are: holding one's spouse captive as a result of an extramarital affair, and rejection due to an impending separation or divorce (Van Hasselt et al., in press c). The hostage–non-hostage distinction is further underscored in Fig. 1. This figure presents the "Behavioral Continuum" which includes the focus of both hostage (i.e., instrumental) and non-hostage (expressive) situations.

Even in "pure" hostage situations, however, there is evidence that perpetrators experience considerable emotionality, especially during the chaos of the incident onset (Romano, 2002). This makes hostage-takers, as well as victims, susceptible to slipping into a crisis, which requires the application of appropriate crisis intervention techniques.

1.2. Tactical vs. negotiated resolution

A tactical response refers to actions taken by a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) or similar specialized unit to resolve either the hostage or non-hostage situation (Mijares, McCarthy, & Perkins, 2000). In most of these cases, a determination has been made that despite negotiation efforts, peaceful resolution appears unlikely (e.g., the subject refuses to talk with negotiators, or remains adamantly noncompliant/resistive). In some situations, the subject may have engaged in a behavior, such as a shooting of a victim, that necessitates an immediate tactical response to prevent additional harm (McGeorge, 1983). SWAT teams are composed of personnel with highly specialized training in forced entries, hostage/victim extraction, and subject containment/termination (Jones, 1996; Kaiser, 1990; Vecchi, 2002).

An important concept that has received increased attention in this field is the *action imperative*. This refers to the taking of (tactical) action when, in fact, there was no clear basis for doing so (Dalfonzo, 2002). An example of the action imperative is an on-scene commander deciding to end a situation tactically because, although negotiations are in progress, they are (from his perspective): (a) too lengthy, or (b) not resulting in any obvious resolution. Such decision-making is usually based on a lack of understanding regarding the negotiation process (Vecchi, 2002). In particular, the action imperative is taken when commanders or tactical operators are not aware that time (i.e., protracted negotiations) is the "negotiator's ally" in defusing critical incidents.
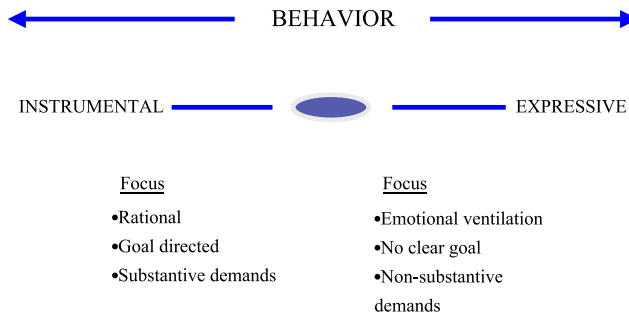

Fig. 1. Behavioral continuum.

Conflict can be defined as the perceived blocking of important goals, needs, or interests of one person or group by another person or group (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). A person's response to conflict can be constructive or destructive. For example, in a child custody battle, the losing parent (whose need to have her children is blocked by her former husband, via a court order) could respond constructively by taking her ex-husband back to court, or destructively by taking her children by force. In the event of the latter, a crisis may result if she is unable to cope with the problem. At this point, the wife's response to the crisis could be adaptive or maladaptive (Rosenbluh, 2001). For example, she could take an adaptive approach by returning the children and seeking counseling. Or, she could take a maladaptive approach by taking the children hostage, barricading herself, and threatening to kill them if she is not awarded custody.

2. Crises: states, stages, and intervention

A crisis is the result of a conflict gone awry. A crisis is a situation that a person perceives as presenting insurmountable obstacles to achieving desired goals or outcomes (Caplan, 1961; Carkhuff & Berenson, 1977). Further, there is the sense that these impediments cannot be managed through the usual problem-solving methods (James & Gilliland, 2001). Whether or not a situation is viewed as a crisis depends on current perception, previous experiences, level of resiliency, and coping skills. This explains why a particularly horrific event will result in crisis for some but not others. For example, a police investigation involving a murder may have minimal impact on the seasoned homicide detective who has become desensitized to even the most gruesome crime scenes. By contrast, the murder scene could be a triggering event for crisis in the victim's neighbor, who discovered the body.

2.1. The crisis state

Most crises requiring negotiation/intervention are due to a significant loss or rejection, termination from employment, a decline in health status, financial reversal, or loss of freedom (Marino, 1995). Two or more losses within a short period of time (often referred to by police crisis negotiators as a "double whammy") are often the "final straw" or antecedent that sends a person into crisis (McMains & Mullins, 2001; Romano, 2002). A crisis state has the following characteristics: (1) the person in crisis behaves at an intense emotional and irrational level (rather than at a rational/thinking level) in response to a situation that is perceived as overwhelming, (2) the situation has occurred within the past 24 to 48 h, and (3) the event is seen as a threat to one's psychological and/or physical well-being.

2.2. Crisis stages

A crisis generally occurs in four predictable stages: pre-crisis, crisis, accommodation/ negotiation, and resolution (James & Gilliland, 2001; McMains & Mullins, 2001). In the *pre-crisis stage*, a person goes about his or her normal routine, unaware of a problem or looming

event. The *crisis stage* is characterized by high emotions, low rationality, and an inability to cope with a problem that is perceived to be a serious threat. Here, frustration and tension increase as a result of conflict and the person being unable to deal with the challenge using previously effective coping skills. It is often during the onset of the crisis stage that police negotiators or mobile crisis responders are called upon to intervene. By the *accommodation/ negotiation stage*, the individual begins to "work through" the crisis by being receptive to suggestions and thinking more clearly about resolving the situation. In this stage, there is a lessening of emotional intensity and a shift towards more productive problem solving. The *resolution stage* involves the working out of an acceptable solution, thus ending the crisis. This final stage results in the person experiencing renewed equilibrium and stability.

2.3. Goals of crisis intervention

Once coping mechanisms fail, and a person falls into a crisis state, normal functioning is disrupted. What is normally resolved at a rational or cognitive level is now dealt with at an emotional or affective level. Therefore, restoring the ability of a person to cope through the reestablishment of baseline functioning levels is the primary purpose of crisis intervention (James & Gilliland, 2001; Roberts, 2000). To accomplish this, crisis negotiation involves: (1) establishing communication and developing rapport, (2) buying time, (3) defusing intense emotions, and (4) gathering intelligence to ascertain the optimal negotiation/intervention strategies and tactics (Lanceley, 1999; Romano & McMann, 1997). These events are discussed briefly below.

2.3.1. Establishing communication and developing rapport
Individuals who are able to articulate clear statements of feeling are ultimately in a better position to solve their problems. Thus, in crisis intervention, actively listening to what the person in crisis is saying is vital. When a listener (negotiator) is able to reflect the subject's feelings, the former is perceived as being understanding (see "Active Listening Skills" below). This is the basis for a relationship in which the person in crisis is ready to accept and act upon the suggestions of the negotiator, thereby resolving the crisis.

2.3.2. Buying time
"Time is the crisis negotiator's greatest ally" (Romano, 2002). The passage of time alone usually decreases stress and emotional levels, and sets the stage for achieving the goals of crisis intervention. In law enforcement circles, buying time is known as "verbal containment", or the process of keeping the person in crisis "occupied" via ongoing discussions with the negotiator.

2.3.3. Defusing intense emotions
Communication occurs on two levels. The first level relates to the content or story, which is based on the facts as related by the speaker. The second level of communication pertains to emotion, which is the affective reaction to the story (i.e., how the person feels about what he or she just said). The emotional reaction, and behavior based on that reaction, is what creates

crisis, rather than the actual event itself. Assessing communication levels is accomplished by examining statements in terms of their content and attached emotions; a person may communicate the same content, but with different emotional overlays. For example, "I hate you" may reflect disdain, while "I HATE YOU!" may reflect anger. How a person feels about a situation will strongly influence their behavior; therefore, listening for and addressing the intense emotions behind the content is crucial in influencing the person's behavior in crisis situations.

2.3.4. Gathering intelligence

This relates to the ongoing assessment of the crisis situation in order to: (a) ascertain the lethality or potential harm to the person in crisis (and others), (b) identify precipitating events, and (c) formulate proposed courses of action and post-crisis options (e.g., therapy, medical follow-up, incarceration). Intelligence gathering is accomplished through communication with the person in crisis, and by investigating the background of the person via interviews (family, friends, co-workers) and records checks (criminal, civil, medical, psychological).

2.4. Crisis intervention stages

Regardless of the model employed, crisis intervention in the context of negotiation encompasses four primary stages (Hammer & Rogan, 1997; Rogan, 1997; Womack & Walsh, 1997): (1) dealing with emotions, (2) establishing communication, (3) identifying the precipitating event(s), and (4) problem solving.

2.4.1. Dealing with emotions

Dealing with emotions is a requisite skill for a crisis negotiator given the fact that intense, volatile emotions are a hallmark of crisis situations (Noesner & Webster, 1997; Rogan, 1997; Webster, 1998a). However, making assumptions about a person's emotions based upon the circumstances can impede crisis intervention. For example, during a situation where a subject has barricaded himself in his home and is threatening to commit suicide, the negotiator attempts to demonstrate empathy by saying: "I know how you feel". The subject responds by saying, "You don't know how I feel. . .just go away". In this case, the negotiator's attempt at empathy is counterproductive because the person in crisis does not believe the negotiator has ever tried to commit suicide before. And regardless of whether or not this is true, the perception of the person in crisis is their reality. Therefore, arguing or trying to be rational with the person in crisis is pointless. An alternative approach would be for the negotiator to state, "I've never been in your situation before, but I imagine you must be feeling very depressed and lonely". In saying this, the negotiator is demonstrating that he or she is trying to understand the situation from the perspective of the person in crisis without making potentially faulty assumptions.

2.4.2. Establishing communication

Establishing communication is the vehicle for the delivery of crisis intervention strategies and tactics (Hammer & Rogan, 1997; Noesner & Webster, 1997; Webster, 1998a). The

negotiator's voice tone and intonation are at least as important as the content of the communication. Content can be easily altered by informing the person in crisis that you are simply trying to understand; however, it is much more difficult to "fix" an attitude that is perceived by the person in crisis as being "bad", hostile, or disinterested. In addition, communication delivery must be deliberate, methodical, and, most importantly, non-judgmental. A nonjudgmental perspective is best described as accepting; the subject perceives that his or her feelings, values, thoughts, and opinions are viewed as important. The negotiator should not inject his or her values into the situation; however, this does not mean that the negotiator agrees with the values of the subject. This disagreement can be relayed to the subject as follows: "From what you're saying, I can imagine how your wife could have made you angry enough to kill her...That would have made me angry too, but I don't think I could have done what you did".

2.4.3. Identifying the precipitating event(s)

A precipitating event is the "last straw" or "trigger" that propels a person into crisis. As mentioned earlier, the precipitating event is often a significant loss or reversal (e.g., spouse, job, money) (Romano, 2002). Identifying the precipitating event is critical in laying the groundwork for problem solving because it identifies the conflict that needs to be resolved in the negotiation process.

Due to initial high levels of emotionality, the person in crisis is often confused about the impact of the precipitating event. However, these are the "hooks" used by negotiators to resolve the crisis, and must be identified and focused upon in crisis negotiations (Dalfonzo, 2002). For example, a scenario encountered by law enforcement might involve a despondent subject whose ex-wife recently informed him that she is planning to gain full custody of their children and deprive him of visitation. The subject responds by barricading himself and the children in his home, refusing to come out or release the children. The "hook" here is obviously the anticipated loss (of the children) which must be identified and targeted by the negotiator. Then, by providing justification (and minimization of hostile intent) for this behavior (e.g., "You aren't doing this to hurt your children in any way; you're doing this out of your love and concern for them; you're trying to protect them"), the actions of the subject are positively reframed. This serves to alleviate internal conflict, defuse negative emotions, and set the stage for subsequent problem solving and crisis resolution.

2.4.4. Problem solving

Once emotions are better controlled, communication has been established, and the triggering event has been identified and discussed, the subject is more likely to be receptive to problem solving. Problem solving is a multistep behavioral process in which the negotiator helps the person in crisis explore alternatives and concrete solutions. Problem solving in crisis negotiation is an adaptation of steps delineated by behavioral researchers over the past several years: (1) defining the problem, (2) brainstorming possible solutions, (3) eliminating unacceptable solutions, (4) choosing a solution that both the negotiator and person in crisis finds acceptable, (5) planning the implementation, and (6) carrying out the plan (e.g., D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; Goldfried & Davison, 1994).

Effective problem solving involves, in part, listening for distorted cognitions from the person in crisis. Cognitive style influences an individual's perception of self and the situation. Cognitions serve as a "filter" through which the world is viewed. Further, they influence a person's reaction to events, where faulty, dysfunctional, or irrational thinking may lead to emotional distress or even crisis. Sometimes these distortions affect the prospects for problem solving and must be addressed by the negotiator. Illustrative is the case of a drug addict who tries to steal a prescription drug in a pharmacy and is caught. The police are notified and surround the building before he can escape. As a result, the subject becomes despondent and demands to be set free or he will kill himself because he does not view going to prison as an option. Here, the distorted thinking is the presumed assumption of only two options: going free or to prison. In response, the negotiator offers another choice: the possibility of being sent to drug rehabilitation rather than prison (which may or may not be a reality). Eventually, the person surrenders without further incident. This suggestion by the negotiator redirects the thinking of the subject, who now sees a more acceptable option.

3. Behavioral change stairway model

The Behavioral Change Stairway Model (BCSM), developed by the FBI's Crisis Negotiation Unit, outlines the relationship-building process involving the negotiator and subject which culminates in a peaceful settlement of the critical incident (Dalfonzo, 2002; Noesner & Webster, 1997; Webster, 1998a, 1998b). The heuristic value of this model has been consistently documented in the resolution of a wide range of highly volatile crisis situations (Dalfonzo, 2002; Flood, 2003).

BCSM consists of five stages: active listening, empathy, rapport, influence, and behavioral change. Progression through these stages occurs sequentially and cumulatively. Specifically, the negotiator proceeds in sequence from Stage 1 (active listening) to Stage 5 (behavioral change). However, in order to establish rapport (Stage 3) with the subject, active listening skills (Stage 1) and empathy (Stage 2) must first be demonstrated (and maintained throughout) by the negotiator. As this process continues, influence (Stage 4) and behavioral change (Stage 5) follow. The latter stage refers to the successful resolution of the crisis that can only occur when, and only when, the previous stages have been carried out successfully (see Fig. 2).

3.1. Stage 1: active listening

Most persons in crisis have a desire to be heard and understood. Active listening attends to this need and is critical for developing a relationship that will ultimately lead to behavioral change and crisis resolution (Lanceley, 1999; Noesner & Webster, 1997; Webster, 1998a). Active listening skills are essential components of BCSM and form the "bedrock" of crisis intervention. Active listening is composed of core and supplemental groupings. The core group consists of Mirroring, Paraphrasing, Emotional Labeling, and Summarizing. Effective Pauses (silence), Minimal Encouragers, Open-ended Questions, and "I" statements comprise
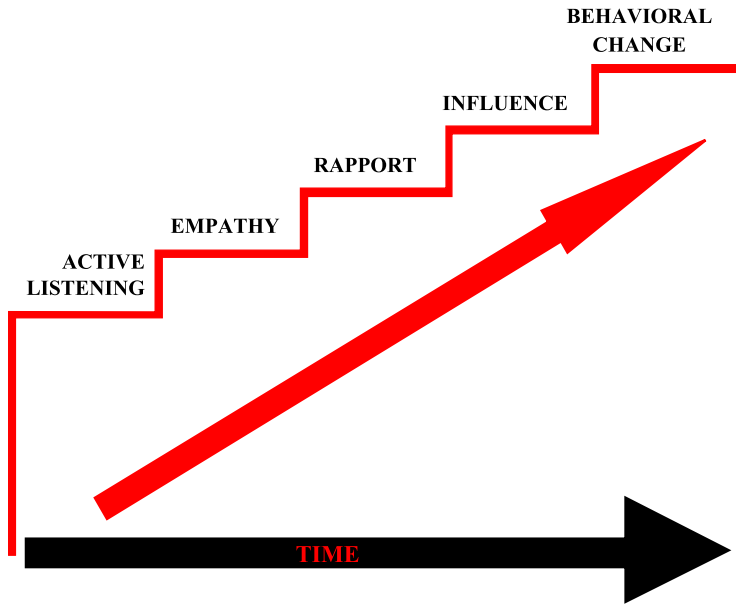
Fig. 2. Behavioral change stairway.

the supplemental group. These skills are virtually identical to those utilized in counseling to establish rapport and positive therapeutic relationships with clients (Evan, Hearn, Uhlemann, & Ivey, 1989; Hersen & Van Hasselt, 1998).

3.1.1. Core active listening skills

Mirroring refers to repeating the last few words or gist of the person in crisis. It demonstrates to the subject that the negotiator is attentive. Further, it elicits the individual's specific concerns and problems that must be identified in the negotiation process. Using mirroring helps to ensure that the discussion focuses on the person in crisis rather than on the negotiator, thereby remaining in the subject's frame of reference.

Paraphrasing involves restating the content of what the subject said in the negotiator's own words. This reflects an attempt by the crisis negotiator to take the perspective of the person in crisis. *Emotional labeling* identifies the emotions of the subject. Even if the negotiator initially misidentifies an emotion, this effort at least demonstrates to the person in crisis that the negotiator is trying to understand the situation, which tends to defuse emotionality. Examples of emotional labeling include: "You sound angry", "You seem frustrated", and "I hear frustration in your voice".

Summarizing offers a restating of both the content and emotion expressed by the subject. This provides clarification of what the person in crisis is experiencing. In addition, it further reflects the effort of the negotiator to view the situation from the perspective of the subject. An example of summarizing might be, "Let me make sure I understand what you're saying; you lost your job for no apparent reason (paraphrase) and this makes you angry (labeled emotion)".

3.1.2. Supplemental active listening skills

Effective pauses are deliberate silences before or after meaningful comments by the negotiator. These help the subject focus on the content of what the negotiator is saying because the pauses increase anticipation (if employed before the meaningful comment) and reflection (when used after the meaningful comment). For example, the negotiator might say, "Tell me if I have this right. . .(pause). . .You are angry with your mother because she never showed you love", or "You sound angry about the loss of your father. . .(pause). . .Tell me more about that".

Minimal encouragers are verbal cues to the subject that the negotiator is attentive and attempting to understand the perspective of the person. Minimal encouragers are used while the negotiator is listening and include: "uh-huh", "yes", "right", "go on", and "okay".

Open-ended questions encourage the subject to expand on his or her responses in an effort to decrease emotionality and bring the person in crisis to a more rational level. Open-ended questions do not limit the responses to *either-or* or *yes-no* answers, but require elaboration and further detail from the subject. Open-ended questions typically start with "What" or "When" or statements such as, "Tell me more about that". "Why" statements are usually avoided, as they tend to be perceived as interrogatory.

"I" statements are used by the negotiator when it is appropriate to make a personal disclosure to further develop rapport, or when the person in crisis is verbally attacking the negotiator. A negotiator uses a personal disclosure to connect an emotion or experience within the context of what the person in crisis is describing. For example, the negotiator may say, "I am a father too, but I can only imagine what it must be like to lose a son; it must be terrible". When being verbally confronted, the negotiator can use the "I" message in this way: "When you say that I don't care, it frustrates me because I really am trying to understand your situation and I really want to help you; I am here because I want to be, not because I have to be".

When initially employing active listening, it is recommended that the crisis responder use the core group (mirroring, paraphrasing, emotional labeling, summarizing) until the negotiator has determined effective "hooks". The supplemental group should be used as necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the core elements (Vecchi, 2003a) (Fig. 3).

In many cases, the negotiator is the only person who has made an effort to deal with the crisis situation from the subject's frame of reference (Dalfonzo, 2002). Active listening skills are the foundation of effective crisis intervention, and the first step towards affecting behavioral change.

3.2. Stage 2: empathy

Empathy is a natural by-product of effective active listening. It implies an identification with, and understanding of, another's situation, feelings, and motives (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The negotiator uses empathy to "see through the eyes" of the person in crisis and to absorb some of the tension. In crisis intervention, the goal is not to "feel sorry" for the subject, but to establish a relationship through effective communication, enabling resolution through collaboration.

A consideration in developing empathy is the importance of voice tone (Romano, 2002). Tone influences how the person in crisis perceives the meaning of what the negotiator is

CORE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

1. **Mirroring**
    a. The "gist"
    b. Last couple of words

2. **Paraphrasing**
    a. Put meaning into your own words

3. **Emotional Labeling**
    a. Identify the feeling
    b. "You sound…"
    c. "You seem…"
    d. "I hear…"

4. **Summarizing**
    a. Restating the content and the emotions of the person's story
    b. Combining the information obtained during paraphrasing and emotional labeling

SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

5. **Effective Pauses**
    a. Silence
    b. Used immediately before or after saying something meaningful

6. **Minimal Encouragers**
    a. Indicates your presence and attention to subject
    b. "Uh-huh…yes…right…ok"

7. **"I" Messages**
    a. "When you say…I feel…"

8. **Open-Ended Questions**
    a. "What…?"
    b. "When…?"
    c. "Tell me more…"
    d. "I'd like to hear more…"

Fig. 3.

saying. And it is this perception of meaning that counts most in effective crisis intervention (whether or not the perception is based in reality). Tone reflects concern and genuineness through inflection and pitch; it also expresses emotion, demeanor, and sincerity.

3.3. Stage 3: rapport

Until this stage of the BCSM, the relationship has been one-sided: the person in crisis has been talking and the negotiator has been actively listening and empathetic. As empathy is shown, rapport develops, which is characterized by increased trust and mutual affinity. Once rapport has been developed, the person in crisis is more likely to listen to (and accept) what the negotiator has to offer. At this stage, the negotiator, in collaboration with the subject, begins to build themes that provide "face saving" justifications, minimizations, or "blending" which serve as precursors to ending the crisis (Dalfonzo, 2002). Themes involve contrived rationales to

explain, justify, mitigate, or excuse the faulty behavior; they also address distorted thinking by positively reframing the situation. Minimization serves to downplaying negative behavior exhibited by the person in crisis. In blending, the negotiator and subject: (a) agree where possible without conceding, (b) reduce real or perceived differences, and (c) find common ground. By now, the subject should be more amenable to behavior change efforts by the negotiator.

3.4. Stage 4: influence

At this stage, a relationship has been established and the subject is willing to accept the suggestions of the negotiator as a prelude to behavior change. In negotiator parlance, the negotiator has "earned the right" to recommend a course of action to the subject as a result of collaborative problem solving. Now, the negotiator and subject work together to identify solutions and alternatives that are nonviolent and realistic.

3.5. Stage 5: behavioral change

Behavioral change will most likely occur only if the previous four stages have been successfully completed. Obstacles to reaching this final stage are usually: (1) the negotiator moving too rapidly through the stages, or (2) omitting stages in a misguided effort to end the crisis through (premature) problem solving. Again, the key to behavior change in crisis negotiation is achieving a positive relationship between the negotiator and subject via active listening, empathy, rapport, and behavior influence strategies and tactics. At this final stage, the subject will likely follow the negotiator's suggestions to the extent that negotiator tasks in the previous stages have been effectively carried out.

4. Role-playing

Role-playing has become one of the most frequently used instructional tools in law enforcement. Illustrative of the widespread use of role-playing are results of a survey by Sharp (2000) who found that over 80% of police agencies polled utilized them in training. Further, 100% of respondents indicated that role-plays are valuable in a variety of exercises, such as those conducted by SWAT and Field Force Units. In addition, role-play procedures have been successfully employed in police recruit selection and promotion evaluations (conducted in law enforcement assessment centers).

In recent years, role-playing has also become a mainstay in the evaluation and training of crisis negotiation skills (see review by Van Hasselt and Romano, 2004). Indeed, the vast majority of crisis negotiation training programs rely on role-playing to provide simulations of real-world critical incidents. Moreover, role-plays have served as the primary vehicle for the training of requisite negotiator competencies (e.g., active listening skills) that have been associated with successful negotiation efforts (Greenstone, 1995; Noesner, 1992). Even online role-plays have been proven effective in negotiation skills building (Vecchi, 2003b). "And

although direct or naturalistic observation. . .of negotiators in actual critical incidents would be a preferred approach for assessment and modification of negotiators' skill level, the seriousness and high-risk nature of these encounters make such an approach unrealistic (and dangerous). Therefore, role-playing is a vital 'next best' approach" (Van Hasselt et al., in press a, p. 4).

4.1. Role-play format

Role-playing in crisis negotiation training has taken a variety of forms. Some role-plays have been based on actual incidents that have occurred, while others have been designed in anticipation of situations likely to be encountered. CNU has employed a combination of role-play scenarios in its NCNC, which provides crisis negotiation training to FBI agents and police officers. Training incorporates role-play scenarios that are based on hostage, barricaded, suicide, and kidnapping incidents that have taken place and required a law enforcement response. These situations reflect CNU's direct involvement in numerous critical incidents nationally and internationally over the past 25 years.

One set of role-play items developed by CNU consists of scenarios describing crises in each of three categories: (1) Family-Domestic, (2) Workplace, and (3) Suicide. Sample items from each category are provided below.

4.1.1. Family-domestic

Jim Smith has abducted his common law wife and their son from a distant state. She had obtained a court order preventing him from seeing her or her son. She has repeatedly rejected his efforts at reconciliation and he has stalked and harassed her in the past. He kidnapped her and the child in the middle of the night from her parent's home and drove her to an unoccupied farmhouse nearby where he ran out of gas. Authorities located his vehicle and then discovered them holed up in the farmhouse.

4.1.2. Workplace

John Henry is angry because the factory where he has worked for 10 years fired most of the senior workers to reduce payroll and increase profits. He blames the factory manager for the loss of his job. He brought a gun into his office and is threatening to kill him if he does not get his job back. He feels he has been treated badly and not given the respect he has earned after 10 years of hard work.

4.1.3. Suicide

Frank was a successful banker who has been living the good life. Unfortunately, several of his investments and financial decisions have failed and he is facing financial ruin. He feels he will bring shame to his family, his wife will leave him, and his possessions will be taken away. He feels hopeless and helpless. He believes that killing himself is the only way out. One of his bank employees observed him with a gun in his office and called the police to intervene.

For training purposes, the above scenarios may include a series of pre-arranged prompts delivered by a confederate playing the role of subject. In these cases, the role-play is

relatively brief, lasting anywhere from one to several minutes. Where prompts are not provided, the scenario lasts longer, but is still much shorter than most real-world crisis situations. However, the relatively brief format allows for frequent instructor feedback concerning the use of targeted negotiation skills.

Scenarios of longer duration (30 min or more) provide negotiators the opportunity to apply their skills in increasingly more realistic situations. Examples include a bank robbery gone awry, and a domestic situation involving a barricaded husband and spouse. The NCNC carries out such training in "Hogan's Alley", the FBI Academy's mock city that provides a variety of naturalistic settings (e.g., hotel, drug store, apartment building) to stage critical incidents. Student negotiation teams are provided with a scenario/incident overview, including some background on the perpetrator and setting. Then, they are asked to make contact with the subject, and attempt to resolve the situation peacefully using their newly acquired negotiation skills.

Still another type of role-play involves events that are several hours in duration, and thus more like actual crisis situations. An example is an NCNC scenario in which a subject has hijacked a school bus with children and is threatening to blow up the bus and kill everyone inside if his demands are not met.

Finally, initial experimentation on the use of online role-plays has taken the above precepts and applied them within a synchronized (live) chat room environment, where confederates play persons in crisis (suicidal, violent, psychotic) and the negotiator applies the BCSM to alleviate the crisis (Vecchi, 2003a, 2003b). Communication occurs via the written word; emotion is portrayed through pauses ("..."), punctuation ("!"), variations of upper and lower case letters ("GO AWAY" or "go away"), or any combination. Advantages of this training format in which negotiations are automatically recorded verbatim, include the ability to: (1) provide clear and frequent feedback, (2) make comparisons between training sessions to assess the negotiator's level of skill acquisition, and (3) provide specific suggestions for improvement. Disadvantages include the variances associated with typing ability, inter-response, time delays, and the absence of visual and audio cues (Vecchi, 2003b).

4.2. Negotiation skills building

As Hatcher, Mohandie, Turner and Gelles (1998) cogently point out, "The goal or mission of crisis/hostage negotiation is to utilize verbal strategies to buy time and intervene so that the emotions of the perpetrator can decrease and rationality can increase" (p. 455). The specific verbal strategies used to accomplish this goal fall under the rubric of "active listening skills" discussed earlier. Consequently, these behaviors, which are critical for the establishment of rapport between negotiator and subject in crisis situations, have been targeted in most crisis negotiation skills training programs (Van Hasselt and Romano, 2004).

To teach these skills, training has typically employed a number of behavior change strategies, including: (1) *direct instructions* concerning skills needed (e.g., active listening, surrender instructions) in crisis situations; (2) *performance feedback* regarding negotiator behaviors and skill level displayed in scenarios; (3) *positive reinforcement* of successive approximations to desired negotiator responses (i.e., "shaping"); and (4) *modeling* by the trainer to demonstrate effective responses.

Despite the widespread application of role-play strategies in law enforcement in general, and crisis negotiation, in particular, little research has been carried out concerning the systematic development and validation of these procedures. In the first phase of an initial effort in this area, Van Hasselt et al. (in press b) describe construction of the role-play instrument utilized by CNU. This measure was based on actual negotiated encounters by CNU, and employed specifically for evaluation and training of crisis negotiation skills. The second phase of their investigation involved validation of the role-play test by determining the extent to which it discriminated expert from nonexpert crisis negotiators. A self-report measure of emotional empathy also was administered.

Results indicated that in comparison to nonexperts, expert negotiators showed significantly higher levels of active listening skill components (paraphrasing, emotion labeling, reflecting, open-ended questions). Further, significant positive relationships were obtained between use of active listening skills and emotional empathy.

A second study incorporated the previously validated role-play test to carry out one of the first empirical investigations of the efficacy of crisis negotiation training (Van Hasselt et al., in press a). Here, FBI Special Agents participating in the NCNC were assessed via role-play before and after training. This behaviorally based program focused on the training of active listening skills, and a number of other vital competency areas requisite to successful diffusion and resolution of crisis situations. Van Hasselt et al. (in press a) found significant pre-post differences on nearly all active listening skills for course participants. Further, attempts to problem solve, often detrimental in early phases of crisis negotiation, decreased as a function of training.

Vecchi (2003b) reported similar findings in teaching online crisis negotiation skills to police officers and other criminal justice students in an academic environment. Direct instructions were provided, via syllabus and lectures, and performance was gauged in the context of chat room sessions where students practiced their crisis negotiation skills with role-players portraying persons in crisis. Over the course of two classes, most students showed a marked improvement in their ability to effectively employ the BCSM. This included increased utilization of active listening and reduced use of problem solving during chat sessions. Improved negotiation skill appeared to be a function of behavior rehearsal and performance feedback from the instructor and fellow students (Vecchi, 2003b).

5. Summary and future directions

The purpose of this paper was to review three primary components of the crisis (hostage) negotiation process. The first was the incorporation of crisis management and intervention in crisis negotiation, which reflects: (a) the wider range of problems targeted by negotiators over the past several years, and (b) recognition of the utility of applying a broader spectrum of available strategies based on crisis theory. The second component presently discussed was the BCSM implemented by the CNU and now adopted (in some form) by most negotiation training programs. In this model, adherence to a clearly defined series of steps (in sequential and cumulative fashion) significantly increases the likelihood of successful

negotiated resolutions. And third, role-play procedures were described as one of the most frequently employed vehicles for the evaluation and training of required crisis negotiation skills.

Interestingly, while a voluminous body of writings has emerged concerning strategies and issues in crisis negotiation (see Call, 1999; McMains & Mullins, 2001; Romano & McMann, 1997), most of these have been position papers, case studies, or anecdotal reports. Further, most research in this area has involved attempts to develop typologies of hostage takers (Kobetz, 1975; Soskis & Van Zandt, 1986; Strentz, 1986), or to determine outcomes of hostage or barricade incidents (e.g., number of hostages/responding officers killed, wounded, or unharmed) (Butler, Leitenberg, & Fuselier, 1993; Friedland & Merari, 1992). To date, there is a modicum of data regarding the utility of specific negotiation approaches themselves. Moreover, investigative efforts to prescriptively apply the most efficacious negotiation strategies based on empirically grounded decision-making have yet to be conducted.

In an initial attempt to remedy this situation, CNU is currently carrying out a comprehensive analysis of crisis negotiation strategies to reduce harm to a group constituting a significant portion of negotiation call-outs: domestic violence victims (see Van Hasselt et al., in press c). This will be accomplished through in-depth assessments of domestic violence perpetrators who have taken a spouse, partner, and/or child(ren) hostage. Evaluations will include: extensive assessments of a wide range of subject/background, victim, and (where relevant) child variables, and determination of factors associated with successful or unsuccessful crisis negotiation and resolution. It is anticipated that this analysis will yield data that will be of crucial importance to crisis negotiators in their efforts to successfully resolve high-risk critical incidents occurring in the home.

Another topic warranting further attention is the effectiveness of crisis negotiation skills training programs. Van Hasselt et al. (in press b) and Vecchi (2003b) found preliminary evidence for the potential value of such training. However, their results were based on results of role-play assessments employed pre- and post-training. Evaluation of in vivo skill level, as well as maintenance of trained skills over time (post-training), is clearly warranted.

There is also a need for further research in online crisis negotiation, both as a training forum for skills building and as a possible medium for crisis intervention and negotiation. The practical value of online skills building is evident, as it is generally more convenient and less costly than traditional training formats. Also, preliminary evidence suggests its potential for skills building (Vecchi, 2003b). However, data have yet to be adduced regarding its effectiveness relative to "live" training. Further, there is a need for research on the feasibility of using online crisis intervention and negotiation in real life situations. This is important in light of the significant increase in computer usage internationally; the computer may become a preferred method by which some individuals may actually choose to communicate.

Finally, there is a need to make BCSM and role-play strategies presently discussed available to non-law enforcement professionals, (e.g., psychologists and mediators) since these groups frequently deal with persons in crisis where violence potential is high. Such training could be provided by law enforcement experts in non-law enforcement contexts, such as crisis counseling and family mediation.

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