

# SOS Détresse

## Relatives in crises / care

At any moment, there may be a person in your environment who is in crisis and you are also affected. You have not chosen this. But from one moment to another you are implicated as well. You have been catapulted into this situation, you are unprepared, and as a relative, you may never have dealt with the issue you are now facing.

Crises can occur at any time and can include

- life crises
- as well as crises after the loss of a loved one
- Crises after diagnoses of incurable or chronic physical and mental illnesses
- Crises when a short-term care becomes a long-term care
- Crises due to loss of employment
- Crises after migration and fleeing the homeland
- Crises relating to Identity and value issues,

and can lead people into serious despair.

You are not only a relative if you belong to the family but also if you feel connected with the person.

## You are important!

You are very important to people in a crisis. As a relative, you may have heard statements like “you are my rock” or “it’s good to know you’re there” or “what would I do without you.” Perhaps the person concerned tells you with their looks that they are glad you are working through this together. Maybe they simply show their helplessness, because they know that you can put up with this at that very moment. That they can let go and focus on themselves because you are there!

You hold, you bring comfort and you also accept to be rejected. You assume the care. You visit every day in hospital or in the nursing home. You cook, wash and take care of the children. You are ready to take over a part of the responsibility. You may also accept that the person in a crisis may almost overwhelm you with their feelings.

It is nice to support someone, on the other hand, it can also be difficult. Furthermore, this may leave you helpless. Perhaps you may notice something that the person in a

crisis does not see and you will want to tell them this. You may also find it difficult to see a person in distress, and will want to wish for the crisis to pass quickly.

## **A balancing act for both sides**

This is a balancing act for both parties: you have to endure that the concerned person continues not to be well. The person concerned has to endure that you want him to be well and sometimes also look for solutions.

Your helplessness and the wish that the other may quickly come out of his shell are legitimate and comprehensible wishes. This is the hope of many relatives who help. However, in this situation, it can often be most helpful if you listen and simply show that you are there.

At the same time, however, you can also ask about what the other needs. Or even say what you just feel or do not understand. It is then possible to talk about things which may otherwise remain speculative.

## **Surpassing oneself**

In this crisis situation, you may grow beyond yourself, you will have powers you were not conscious of. It may also be that this will lead you to your own limits or beyond. For a while, you may endure this well, but there will also be a "STOP" for you. You should realize where your limits lie. When is the right moment to say STOP? How can you convey this to the other person? How do I deal with feelings of guilt which may also sneak up on me?

Remember that if you take care of yourself, you can also help others!

Do you know what would do you good in this situation? What you require, so that your needs are satisfied in these difficult times and are being taken into account?

This is even more so if a temporary crisis becomes a permanent everyday occurrence in cases of care, chronic illness or recurring crises.

Still more than in predictable crises, a further factor is the uncertainty. It is therefore all the more important to use your strength and your energy well.

There can also be moments when you, as a relative, will reach your limits. It is important that you are aware of this moment, that you take it seriously, and to hand over to professional helpers. This applies to all crises at any moment.

## **Invigorate yourself and do yourself some good**

Equally important for yourself is to get in touch with other people, to exchange ideas.

---

Activate your private network and show your needs. Or it could sometimes be helpful to get professional support. A self-help group may be helpful to relatives, or a supportive individual counseling.

Also think about your physical and mental health, in the same way as you take part in the recovery of the person you are taking care of.

As a relative in crises you outdo yourself, perhaps you will find, that having coped with a crisis, you have changed and have completely new skills and resources.

Perhaps you have managed well a conflict-laden crisis and you can emerge from the crisis stronger than before. It may also happen that the person you accompany on his way may progress in a different direction and eventually you go separate ways.

In any case, it should be mentioned here that you, as mainly a silent friend in the background, a companion and an everyday hero, deserve great acknowledgement and respect!