

Crisis Negotiation for Law Enforcement, Corrections, and Emergency Services: Crisis Intervention as Crisis Negotiation

By Arthur Slatkin, Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Ltd., 2015. 152 pp. \$32.95.

With the exception of a subspecialized group of psychiatrists like the author, who works directly with law enforcement, forensic psychiatrists are typically involved after the standoff has been resolved. A psychiatrist may be asked to evaluate the defendant's mental state at the time of the crime, to identify mitigating factors, or to determine adjudicative capacity. Dr. Arthur Slatkin draws upon his 28 years of experience as a consulting psychologist to the Louisville Metro Department's Hostage Negotiation Team. This book is the third in a series by this author. The intended audience is mainly law enforcement. As stated in the preface, it is intended primarily to "enhance Negotiator confidence and competence, well grounded in the deliberate and effective use of self as intervener and negotiator in critical incidents (p viii)." Nevertheless, the book offers a rare glimpse inside crisis negotiation from the standpoint of a mental health professional.

The handbook is fairly brief (152 pp) and is divided into two parts: "Negotiation as Crisis Intervention, Crisis Intervention as Negotiation" (Chapters 1–8) and "Hostage, Barricade, and Suicidal Subject Negotiations" (Chapters 9–11). The first part discusses the basic psychological underpinnings of hostage negotiations and is organized around Roberts' Seven Stage Crisis Intervention Model, which is summarized as follows (p 13):

Plan and conduct a thorough assessment to include a biopsychosocial history and a lethality/imminent dangerousness measure.

Make psychological contact and rapidly establish the collaborative relationship.

Identify the major problems including crisis precipitants.

Encourage an exploration of feelings and emotions.

Generate and explore alternatives and new coping strategies.

Restore functioning through implementation of an action plan.

Plan follow-up and booster sessions.

After an introductory chapter, Chapters 2–8 are organized around the steps in Roberts' model. Each chapter discusses the relevant step and applies it to crisis negotiation. Slatkin discusses the principles underlying each step, helpful qualities to have as a negotiator, and practical techniques for accomplishing each step. He discusses the benefits and pitfalls of various techniques, such as using humor to build rapport. He draws upon his years of experience to provide examples and anecdotes.

In the second section, Slatkin discusses the aspects of particular types of crisis negotiation such as the suicidal subject or barricaded gunman. Although many of the same principles apply, each of these situations requires a different approach. For example, in dealing with a suicidal subject, he reviews the benefits and limitations of contracting, the importance of exploring alternatives, and the importance of removing the means to commit suicide.

The title states that this book is aimed at law enforcement, corrections, and emergency services. It is probably of limited value to the practice of clinical psychiatry, as many of the principles discussed are already familiar to practicing psychiatrists. It may be helpful for providing consultation to law enforcement. I have participated in crisis intervention training for law enforcement and found the handbook helpful. It bridges some of the gaps between law enforcement practice and psychological principles. It discusses what works and what does not in the world of law enforcement, as opposed to the world of mental health treatment.

This handbook offers a concise exploration of the often unfamiliar world of crisis negotiation. For the psychiatrist, it explains how police approach crisis negotiation. For the crisis negotiator, it explains some of the theory behind the techniques. Although the psychological principles discussed are fairly basic for practicing psychiatrists, I found the discussion of crisis negotiation interesting and engaging. I would recommend it for forensic psychiatrists who provide consultation to police departments, primarily conduct criminal evaluations, or are curious about crisis negotiation techniques.

Sherif Soliman, MD
Northfield, OH

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