

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## How Can I Minister to Others During a Crisis?

**During difficult situations, it's important for us to support and strengthen each other. As a family or with your support system, discuss ideas for helping others. Follow this discussion guide to have a conversation and learn about ways you can minister to others during difficult times.**

**Consider:** How can you be a support to others during a crisis?

### INTRODUCTION

Start with a prayer. Ask for the Spirit to inspire you and your family or support system and to guide you in ministering to and helping others.

### ■ Part 1: Tips for Ministering to Others in a Crisis

**Read:** Take turns reading and discussing each of the general guidelines for ministering to others in a crisis below:

- **It can be helpful to just be there for someone.** This can mean a making a phone or video call or sending a text message so people know you are thinking of them. Your presence can be calming and comforting. Offer to talk or spend time together as much as is needed.
- **Listen actively. Focus on the person and listen with your heart.** Don't be distracted by thinking about how you'll respond to what she or he is saying.
- **Remember everyone is different and will respond to crisis differently.** Allow others to go through their own experiences.
- **Encourage and allow others to express how they feel,** but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects that aren't freely shared.
- **Ask questions about how others are feeling and what they are experiencing.** Avoid assuming you already know how they feel.
- **Pray together.** Prayer invites the Spirit and can bring peace and comfort.
- **Be cautious about sharing stories from your past.** It's important to focus on each person and his or her experience.
- **If appropriate and wanted, hug or provide other physical comfort.**
- **Find additional resources you can provide if needed,** including credible sources of information, scriptures or talks, or other ways to find support. The form "Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide" could be a helpful reference. If someone wants professional support, connect with a bishop, your local Family Services office, or other sources.
- **Continue to be present with those who are struggling, even when you are not sure what to say or do.**

**Discuss:** How can I better apply these general guidelines in ministering to others who are in crisis?

### ■ Part 2: Ideas of What to Say and Do

**Read:** Take turns reading a principle and the additional ideas for application below. These principles and ideas can help you minister to those struggling. (As you discuss these principles, look for opportunities to discover additional words and actions to help as well as those that might not be helpful.)

**Discuss:** How can I better learn and apply these principles?

| PRINCIPLE               | WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO?   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Be Compassionate</b> | Show others that you care about them. You might say things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "We love you."</li><li>• "I'm so sorry for your loss."</li><li>• "You are in my thoughts and prayers."</li><li>• "I'm here for you, and I can listen." (It's OK to just sit quietly with the person. Just being there offers support.)</li></ul> |

| PRINCIPLE                                     | WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO?   |
|---|---|
| <b>Allow Others to Express Their Feelings</b> | <p>Ask questions to help others explain their experiences, but avoid forcing them to talk about feelings or subjects they aren't ready to discuss. You might consider questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What worries you the most right now?"</li> <li>• "What coping strategies are you using?"</li> <li>• "What are the hardest challenges you have faced this week?"</li> <li>• "What strengths do you see in yourself and others?"</li> <li>• "What concerns do you have about the future?"</li> <li>• "How does your faith help?"</li> <li>• "Is there anything about your past that is troubling you?"</li> <li>• "Would you share about a time when you experienced healing in your life?"</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Empathize and Normalize Responses</b>      | <p>Show others that you understand their unique experiences and help them feel it's normal to not be OK right now. You might say things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I don't fully understand the pain you are feeling, but I know that this must be hard for you."</li> <li>• "It's OK to feel whatever emotions you are feeling."</li> <li>• People may be feeling sad, angry, confused, lost, numb, guilty, helpless, or many other emotions.</li> <li>• "It's normal to feel like our thoughts and emotions are beyond our control."</li> <li>• "Everyone responds differently—it's OK to feel strong and like you're doing well, and it is OK to struggle."</li> </ul> <p>If others are struggling with sleep, headaches, stomachaches, appetite, daily routines, and spiritual practices, help them know that it is normal to struggle. Help them be patient and graceful with themselves.</p> |
| <b>Suggest Ideas for Ways to Cope</b>         | <p>If others want or need ideas for how to manage emotions and stress, discuss some of these practical ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking time to take care of ourselves, including proper nutrition, hydration, hygiene, exercise, sleep, and prescribed medications</li> <li>• Limiting news and social media</li> <li>• Engaging in service to others as we are able</li> <li>• Learning mindfulness or breathing exercises</li> <li>• Facing life one day, hour, or minute at a time</li> </ul> <p>You might ask questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What are your coping strategies? What has helped you cope with difficulties in the past?"</li> <li>• "How are you taking care of your physical health as well as your mental health?"</li> <li>• "How is your faith helping you? How are you relying upon the Lord?"</li> </ul>                                  |
| <b>Offer Hope</b>                             | <p>In intense crisis situations, deep expressions of faith and hope often can feel trite or not helpful. Consider hopeful statements like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I'm here with you and for you."</li> <li>• "I know people who can help."</li> <li>• "I'll keep checking in with you."</li> <li>• "I'll give you the space that you need, and I'll be available to help and be with you as well."</li> </ul>  |

## ■ Part 3: Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide

**Read:** As we minister to others, we need to take care of ourselves emotionally, mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually. During difficult times, part of being emotionally resilient is checking in with yourself. As you identify things you are struggling with, you can choose coping strategies to help yourself stay healthy.

**Activity:** Each person in the discussion group should fill out the form "Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide" for themselves. After filling out the form, each person can share the responses they identified and the coping strategies they selected or anything else they learned about themselves from the form.

The "Facing Challenges: A Self-Help Guide" can also be a helpful tool for those we minister to.

## ■ Part 4: Who Can I Minister To?

**Consider:** Take some time individually to ponder who you can minister to during this time and how. Write down any thoughts that come to mind, and then discuss as group.

### CONCLUSION

End by having each person take two minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful or valuable to you in this conversation?
- What did you learn?
- What common ground did you find with others?
- How has this conversation changed your perception?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based on this discussion?

Close with a prayer.