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CRISIS INTERVENTION SECTION

NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CRISIS INTERVENTION SECTION

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Dear Readers,

CRISIS INTERVENTION CO-CHAIRS

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Join us at ACR's 2006 Annual Conference, "Celebrating Our Past, Shaping the Future," will be held October 25–28, 2006 in Philadelphia. We look forward to meeting you at our Crisis Intervention Workshops and all the fine events ACR has planned to celebrate conflict resolution and ACR's 5th year as a proud part of that profession.

For information on the conference events and programs, and to register, go to <http://www.acrnet.org>.

Early Bird registration is available through October 6.

Five years ago I created ACR's Crisis Intervention Section with two goals in mind: one, to establish an online center where conflict resolution professionals and law enforcement negotiators could exchange research and practice information; and two, to establish a way for CR professionals to gain the credibility with law enforcement that would allow them to assist hostage negotiation teams in a civilian capacity. I had no idea how to make this happen. Then, as now, this type of assistance was limited almost solely to mental health professionals.

As part of this goal, I contacted Dr. Mitchell Hammer, President of Hammer Consulting, LLC, and recently awarded the title of Professor Emeritus from the American University. He had impressive credentials: more than a decade of advising and training local and federal law enforcement and agencies, including the FBI and the National Institutes of Health. Together with four associates, he also identified a set of letters with the writing of the "Unibomber Manifesto," that helped to identify Ted Kaczynski as the "Unibomber."

Dr. Hammer agreed to write the proposal that established ACR's Crisis Intervention Section as it exists today, a successful and valued forum for exchange of information among law enforcement and CR professionals. He also served as first Chair of the Crisis Intervention Section.

In August 2006, he added another piece to this exchange: the hostage negotiation/S.A.F.E. training, previously offered only to law enforcement, and now offered for the first time to civilians.

This training was presented to participants from the United States and Europe who had proven skills in conflict resolution. The experience was, as one participant put it, one that "kicked my crisis work to the next level."

The training is based on hundreds of hostage negotiation transcripts reviewed by Dr. Hammer and Dr. Randall Rogan. During the course of their research, they began to recognize a pattern of phrases and responses that almost always signaled a disconnect between the negotiator and the subject and, from these, developed a clear framework for quickly identifying those disconnects. The research was then developed into a practical assessment and intervention model – the S.A.F.E. approach – by Dr. Hammer, which focuses on four escalation "anchors" in a crisis situation: (1) Substantive demands/wants, (2) Attunement (relational trust) issues, (3) Face issues, and (4) Emotional distress. *(continued next page)*

The five-day training, in which I had an opportunity to participate, was led by Dr. Hammer and Major Bob Beach, a 37-year veteran in law enforcement with more than 25 years experience in crisis/hostage negotiations. It also included demonstration and lectures by members of the Fairfax County hostage negotiation team.

During the first two days, the class was briefed on hostage negotiation background and techniques; during the remaining three days, Dr. Hammer and Major Beach focused on the S.A.F.E. Model, an approach that identifies specific indicators of imminent trouble and specific strategies and techniques to influence the disturbed party away from these.

The S.A.F.E. approach builds these indicators into four results-oriented frameworks that can quickly uncover the source of a difficulty. In one real-life scenario, for instance, a negotiator repeatedly offered what appeared to be soothing and useful solutions to the subject's distress. But the subject's response was, "What the hell are you talking about!"

Up to now, the negotiator had been gaining ground. His responses appeared to be appropriate. So why the disconnect? Using the guide, it took a matter of seconds for the class to spot the difficulty and find strategies to move the subject into a problem-solving mode.

We used hostage negotiation equipment during the training, and worked with scenarios taken from hostage negotiations. It was tough, exhausting and demanding – these guys are not your mother. In addition, the role players were eerily real, so much so that when they came back into the room to debrief, I sometimes had trouble realizing that they were the "subjects" we had worked so hard to save.

Part of the genius of the S.A.F.E model is the pocket field guide it provides: a portable, 9"x 4.5", 15-page spiral booklet, laminated to protect against any kind of weather, and designed specifically so that a negotiator can quickly flip to trouble indicators and strategies while actually talking to the subject. It is the training distilled into a fast-access tool.

I'm writing about this training because it fulfills one of the two goals that led to the creation of our Section. Being certified in the S.A.F.E model offers a frame through which crisis intervenors can approach law enforcement teams who engage in this work. It is an entrée that has not been widely possible before this, if at all.

If you are interested in working with law enforcement, I urge you to give this avenue your serious consideration. For more information on this training, go to our web page at <http://www.mediate.com/acrcrisisnegotiation/pg21.cfm>.

We're looking forward to seeing you at ACR's annual conference in Philadelphia October 25–28. And mark your calendars for two special sessions at the conference designed specifically for crisis intervenors: *Crisis Intervention and Negotiation Skills for Mediators*, led by Crisis Intervention Co-chair Tina Jaeckle, and *The Value of Crisis Negotiation Strategies and Skills for Conflict Resolution Professionals: Debriefing an Intense, One-week Hostage/Crisis Negotiation Program*, led by Dr. Hammer and Lynne Kinnucan.

In the meantime, enjoy the articles in this issue of the CI News. As always, we look forward to your ideas and comments.

All the best,

Lynne Kinnucan
Editor, *Crisis Intervention News*