

MEETING YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

“You run a crisis line? Isn’t that hard? Is it so sad hearing about that stuff?” These are some of the responses I get when people learn what my job is. I have the honor of overseeing Ozone House’s 24/7 crisis line, and the incredible human beings that staff it. And the answer to each of those questions is an emphatic, “yes!”

Yes, it’s difficult; it’s devastating when people are not okay physically & emotionally, who don’t have the support they need, who are under-resourced, and lacking access to meeting their most basic needs. It is an upsetting reality and it’s happening right here in our community. Ozone House knows that in those moments access to safety, supportive services and human connection are paramount.

I think back to any time that I have felt alone, unsafe or unsure - in those moments I desperately craved being heard. Well-intended comments like, “focus on the bright side” or “it could be worse” didn’t make me feel heard, and definitely didn’t feel better.

What I know now, and what Ozone House demonstrates, is the importance of being there for someone in their pain by acknowledging it. *“It’s awful right now. You feel hurt, and defeated. You’re enduring a lot.”* When we connect with someone on this level first, we are awarded the ability to open the door to hope, safety, and future support.

In my own life, and at Ozone House, I’m learning that what makes the tough stuff better is not looking away, pretending it doesn’t exist, or trying to line it in silver – what makes things better is daring to look at what is difficult, raw, and unjust. Because only if we dare to, do we get this beautiful chance to make it better.

In 1974, Ozone House offered a 24 hour crisis line to the community and our flagship service has been operating unwaveringly ever since. As of June 5th, 2018 we will broaden our platform for crisis intervention to include both Text and Chat capabilities.

A reality for many people in crisis is that a phone call isn’t safe, possible, or preferred. Specifically for the young people we hope to support, speaking on the phone is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. That makes calling a crisis line an even more vulnerable experience, and their willingness to do so, less likely.

Text and Chat ensures that people can get access to support without having to place a call. A person thinking about self-harm at school can slip into a bathroom stall and send a quick text. A family without phones can use the computers at the library to chat. A concerned parent can get information at work. A young person in an unsafe home can get silent support. It’s not about young people who “just like texting better” – it’s about Ozone House meeting people where they are, broadening our reach, and increasing our accessibility.

Ozone House has been a beacon of light for folks experiencing darkness since 1969 – and I couldn’t be more thrilled that as we grow and evolve, we maintain our commitment to facing what is difficult and meeting people where they are. So to answer the question, yes, yes it’s hard. A lot of people are lost, scared and unsafe - but now Ozone House and the opportunity to be heard is just one call, text or chat away.

CALL.TEXT.CHAT established June 5th 2018