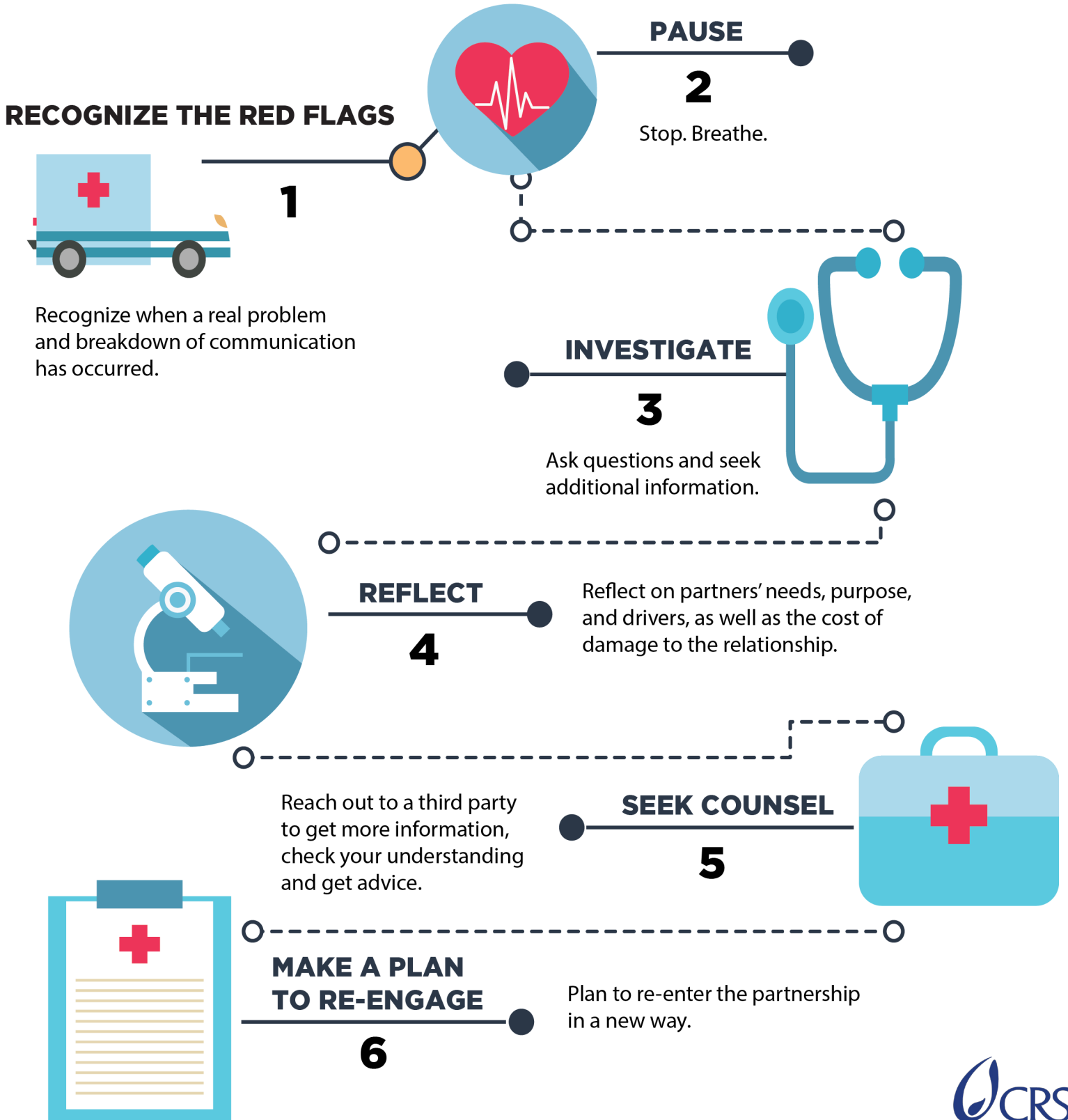


RELATIONSHIP EMERGENCY

In every relationship, there are times when communication breaks down. So, what do you do when you feel like your partnership is in crisis and it's clear communication has broken down? The following steps can help respond to a relationship emergency and get back on track.



RECOGNIZE THE RED FLAGS. PAUSE. INVESTIGATE. REFLECT. SEEK COUNSEL. RE-ENGAGE.

RECOGNIZE the RED FLAGS

The first step to stopping the spiral of escalating tension and erosion of the relationship, is to recognize when a real problem and breakdown of communication has occurred.

- Disrespect
- Lack of mutuality
- Lack of transparency
- Dishonesty
- Undermining

When these happen, they should be a red flag that something has gone wrong in the partnership communication.

PAUSE

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to pause and take a conscious step back from a difficult situation. However, this pause is critical because if a red flag has been raised, it means going any further down this path will only deepen the problem. Stop. Breathe.

INVESTIGATE

Once you've taken a breath and stepped outside of the immediate crisis, it is important to ask some questions and seek additional information. Some initial question might include:

- What is the history of this relationship and how might it be influencing the current situation?
- Why are each of the actors in the relationship acting the way they are? Are intentions clear?
- Who is driving the conflict?
- What might have escalated the communication breakdown from either side?
- What information might I be missing?

REFLECT

In addition to these investigatory questions, it is also important to take a minute to reflect on the relationship. Though it may be difficult, before proceeding, take at least a moment to consider:

- What do I, or my institution, want from this partnership?
- What does my partner want out of the relationship?
- What is our joint purpose?

SEEK COUNSEL

After investigating and reflecting, it is important at this stage to reach out to a third party: to get more information, check your understanding of the situation, and to get advice on potential responses. The third party could be a peer, a supervisor, a mutual partner, or someone from outside entirely. No matter where they come from, it should be a trusted and un-biased person who knows both parties and understands the overall goal of the partnership.

MAKE A PLAN TO RE-ENGAGE

After pausing, getting more information, reflecting and connecting with a trusted counselor, it is times to decide how to re-engage. This may involve involving more people first, and it may be multi-stepped. It is important to note that re-engaging does not mean immediate resolution. A re-engagement plan may move towards repairing the relationship, or it may not. However, whichever direction, it is a plan to re-enter the partnership in a new way, reflective of the principles on which is was founded.