

Canisteo-Greenwood Central School

Follow-up Information for Parents

Dear Parents:

Our children often have difficulty dealing with sad or upsetting events, including the death of someone close. However, they often do not express their fears and sadness in the same way that adults do. This sheet provides some guidance for helping children in the wake of a loss. Please review this and let us know if we can be helpful to your children in this time. We want to support our families and students.

Common Feelings After A Loss or Crisis

Loss of Control: The feeling of loss of control can be overwhelming for children and adults.

Loss of Stability: The feeling that stability may be gone is very threatening. After all, if this disaster or loss could happen, then most anything else might happen too.

Fear: Fear may be the most common reaction of many children. Their worries are very real to them. Children may worry that something will happen to them or to their loved ones.

Grief: An intense sadness and grief of the sudden loss may be typical for adults and children.

Anger: Anger is a common reaction for adults and children alike.

Common Stress Symptoms

While children and adults may react differently to stress, there are many ways that are alike.

Problems sleeping, crankiness, trouble concentrating, headaches or stomachaches, problems getting along with others, loss of appetite and/or lack of energy are common ways we all react to stress.

How to Help Children Cope

- 1. Act calm and controlled.** Children take their emotional cues from the adults in their lives. Avoid appearing anxious or frightened.
- 2. Reassure children that they are safe** and so are the other important adults in their lives.
- 3. Remind them that trustworthy people are in charge.** Explain that emergency workers, police, firemen, and doctors are helping people who are hurt and will help protect us.
- 4. Let children know that it is okay to feel upset.** Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy like this occurs. Let children talk about their feelings.
- 5. Tell children the truth.** Don't try to pretend the event is not serious. Children are smart. They will be more worried if they think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening.
- 6. Keep your explanations understandable for your child's age.** **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that the daily structures of their lives will not change. **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of a crisis. They will be more committed to doing something to help the victims. **For all children, encourage them to talk about their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!**
- 7. Spend time with your child each day.** Spend extra time with them and reassure them that they are safe.
- 8. Limit the amount of TV viewing, radio, and internet use** that children are exposed to.
- 9. Maintain a routine.** Maintain structure and stability within your home.

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists' "Helping Children Cope"