

# TEACHER PACKET

## CRISIS INTERVENTION INFORMATION

### Do's

1. Do listen to students and wait after you've asked a question to give them adequate time to respond.
2. Do allow students the opportunity to express any and all thoughts regarding the accident without judging or evaluating their comments.
3. Do be aware of your voice tone, keeping it low, even, and warm.
4. Do help students see that everyone shares similar feelings.
5. Do expect tears, anger, resentment, fear, inappropriate laughter (often due to tension and discomfort), and stoicism (apparent non-reaction).
6. Do expect some students to become phobic and have sudden overwhelming concerns that may seem illogical to you but are very real to them.
7. Do encourage students to sit in a circle, or to make a more intimate grouping in which to have this discussion.
8. Do stress the confidential nature of the feelings and thoughts expressed in the discussion.
9. Do use your own thoughts and ideas as a means to encourage discussion, not as a means for alleviating your own feelings. Remind Teacher not to share their past crises. Self-disclosure can cause major damage (pour gas on the fire).
10. Do expect that other feelings of loss may emerge.
11. Do give accurate information about the incident. If you don't know an answer say so. When possible, squelch any rumors that may exist by either giving the facts or researching what the facts are and reporting back.

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#### **Don'ts**

1. Don't give "should, ought, or must" statements (i.e. "You shouldn't feel that way").
2. Don't use cliches (i.e. "You must be strong" or "It could have been worse").
3. Don't ask questions without being ready to listen.
4. Don't try to make them feel better; let them know that it's okay to feel what they are feeling.
5. Don't isolate anyone; each will need to feel a part of the group.
6. Don't expect the students to "get over" grief/recovery process within a certain time.
7. Don't assume a person is not grieving just because they don't look or act like it. Let them know you are available at any time IF YOU REALLY ARE.
8. Don't let students interrupt each other; allow each person to finish his or her own statements.
9. Don't discount that person's right to hurt.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. I can see you are hurting.
2. I want to help.
3. I'm here to help you today.
4. What was it like for you when you heard the news?
5. Did you discuss it at home? How did it go?
6. I really didn't know \_\_\_\_\_ very well. Can you tell me about them?
7. If you were a member of \_\_\_\_\_'s family, what do you think you would want at a time like this?
8. How can students help each other through this?
9. What other losses have you experienced?
10. How can we respond in ways that are culturally respectful?

## HINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

1. The Goal is to meet all students needs and to help facilitate the return of the school to pre-crisis level as soon as possible.
2. Our purpose is not to do therapy with students but to make appropriate referrals to those who need more help.
  - Many students do not know how or why they are feeling the way they are. They need to know what is happening and know that their feelings are OK.
  - Names of those needing extra help or whom the team is concerned about need to be given to school administration.
  - Allow kids to feel angry.
  - Let them know that you have no idea how they feel.
3. Bathroom and other places where student congregate need to be checked every 15 minutes.
4. Do not allow students to congregate. They either need to be with a team member or in class.

# **GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO A CRISIS**

## **EMOTIONS YOU MAY OBSERVE**

**Numbness, shock, denial** - After a sudden death, you don't want to believe it has happened; you had no preparation for its occurrence.

**Confusion** - Why did this happen? I don't understand the circumstances. How could this happen to someone I know?

**Fear** - Could something like this happen again? Will something like this happen again?

**Grief** - Sadness, crying, a deep sense of personal loss.

**Anxiety** - A difficulty in explaining or understanding the tragedy; things are not the same at school or in my class.

**Depression** - Emptiness, unhappiness

**Guilt** - An irrational feeling of responsibility for the event. What could I have done to prevent it?

**Anger** - Why did someone do a violent, senseless thing? Why did others let it happen. Anger can be directed toward a specific person or persons or be a more general feeling of anger.

Emotions will differ from person to person. Length and intensity of emotions will also vary from person to person.

## **CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR THAT YOU MY OBSERVE**

**Lack of concentration** - Inability to focus on school work, household chores, and other leisure activities.

**Lack of interest in usual activities** - Their minds are preoccupied with other thoughts and feelings and what would usually be very enjoyable may not have much appeal.

**Greater dependency** - A need to feel protected may result in their wanting to do more with you or not have you away from them for long periods of time; some kids may not want to be alone.

**Problems with sleeping and eating** - Difficulty going to sleep, occasional bad dreams or a decreased or increased appetite are common physical reactions to a stressful event.

**Overly quiet or overly talkative or a combination** - Students may need to talk about a tragic incident over and over again, asking questions that may be unanswerable but needing to ask them anyway. This repetition is often a healthy way of working through the grief process; on the other hand, a student may not want to talk about it much with you, preferring to discuss it with friends, classmates, parents -- those who may have been closer to the tragedy; or the student may not want to talk with anyone about it.

## **STRATEGIES TEACHERS AND PARENTS CAN USE**

**Listen** - don't interrupt, he/she needs to be heard.

**Accept feelings** - They are valid feelings for this student, even though your feelings may not be similar to theirs. Encourage students to be respectful of each other's reactions.

**Empathize** - Let the child know that you recognize his/her sadness, confusion, anger, or whatever feelings he/she has about the tragedy.

**Reassure** - The student is not responsible for what happened. Self-blame is a normal reaction.

**Accept** - The student may not want to talk about the trauma right away. Let him/her know you are willing to listen whenever he/she want or needs to talk about it.

**Be tolerant** of temporary changes. Expect sadness, anger, resentment, fear, inappropriate laughter, guilt, or denial.

**Maintain as much of a sense of routine as possible.**

**Be patient** - Let students know it is okay to be upset and that getting past a traumatic loss will take time.

**Provide additional activities** if the students seem to have excess energy.

**Be alert** - Remember that some students may be grieving/reacting even though they may not look or act upset.

**Don't hesitate to ask for help.** This help can be sought from other parents, the school staff, or an outside professional.

**Give yourself permission to say, "I Don't know"** when you feel pressure to explain why a particular event occurred.

**Be aware** that a crisis, tragedy, sudden death, etc. may stir up feelings in students that are related to other events in their lives. It may reactivate a previous loss or exacerbate concern regarding a pending loss.