Putting the pieces together...

Coping with a Traumatic Event in the School

Central Rivers AEA
Crisis Response Team -

2017
FORWARD

We live in a fast paced world today where “crisis” has become a common occurrence. Our reaction is often sadness and the human tendency of avoidance and suppression of our feelings—a hope that time will pass and with it the pain and the grief. Time does pass, and we can be lulled into believing that everything is fine. Unfortunately, all too often children’s and teens’ efforts to communicate intense feelings during times of crisis are minimized, denied, rationalized, or ignored. What experience has shown is that without the opportunity to express feelings, we may experience “unresolved grief.” In children unresolved grief manifests itself in many ways. We may see chronic complaints, frequent absences, a decline in academic performance, a reduction in self-esteem, depression, self-destructive behavior, and a lack of hope for the future. The development of this manual comes from a belief that grief is a process that contains various stages that individuals may respond to in their own way. When dealt with as a normal reaction to loss, grief can be seen as healthy and growth producing.

Special thanks should be given to the people from a number of organizations that have contributed their crisis intervention plans and traumatic event response plans for the development of this original document. These agencies and organizations include the Scott County Adolescent Suicide Prevention Task Force, Bettendorf Community School District, Davenport Community School District, Loess Hills Area Education Agency (Council Bluffs, Iowa), Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency, Vera French Mental Health Center, Area Education Agency 267, Des Moines Public Schools, Keystone Area Education Agency, Iowa State University Extension Service, and the Millard Public Schools in Omaha, Nebraska.

Also, we must not forget the caring and dedicated principals and staff members of the schools in Iowa who care enough about their students, faculty, and community that they have decided to implement a crisis response program.

This crisis response plan is intended to serve Central Rivers AEA school district administrators as a guide in a school-related crisis such as a student or faculty death, serious injury, suicide, epidemic or other catastrophes. It is recommended that every school district have a crisis event response plan in place within each school, either through the implementation of the AEA 267 plan or the development of their own crisis intervention plan. A crisis response plan should also be reviewed annually by the principal and staff.
THE USE OF THE SCHOOL PROTOCOL

This manual is designed to assist schools in developing a crisis management plan and in helping schools restore emotional health at the time of a traumatic event. Although this manual primarily focuses on the death of a student or staff member and its resulting trauma, it should be understood that other events may cause emotional shock and require a response to the crisis.

Principals, teachers, guidance staff, and other school staff members need to recognize that the days and weeks that follow the death of a student or teacher will be a time in which there is much turmoil and confusion. The amount of turmoil evidenced by the students and staff and the amount of confusion experienced by them will be a direct result of several variables. These variables include the popularity of the individual who died, the manner of death, the manner in which students learn about the death, and whether the death receives closure quickly, or a police investigation continues. Please recognize that individual variables will certainly have an effect on various aspects of intervention. These variables must be kept in mind as you work through the protocol with your students.

If the death was by suicide, acknowledge the tragedy of the event; however, do not encourage memorializing the act of suicide. School personnel should emphasize that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Most individuals who attempt suicide don’t really want to die. They only want to end their pain.

The following pages of the protocol will help guide the principal through a crisis in an organized manner by assuring that important details are taken care of and procedures are followed. The 14-Step Plan for the principal and accompanying checklist are tools that can be utilized quickly and efficiently. The roles of other staff members (teachers, non-certified staff, etc.) are also delineated in concise outlines.
NOTIFICATION FLOW CHART

CRISIS OCCURS

STEP 1
School Building Administrator contacts AEA Regional Administrator.

STEP 2
AEA Regional Administrator contacts CRT Team Leader:
- Carla Knutsen—Central
- Laura Heitland—South
- Kandi Bienfang-Lee/Pam Stephenson—North

If AEA Regional Administrator unavailable, Bldg. Administrator contacts SPED Administrator so AEA assistance may be initiated

STEP 1A

STEP 3
CRT Team Leader contacts:
1) LEA Building Administrator
2) Team Rep of Building

CRT Team Leader and Team Rep. assign members for the Crisis

STEP 3A
CRT Team Leader assists with Administrative Duties

STEP 3B
CRT Team Leader notifies Ed. Services Secretary of Crisis Event

STEP 4
CRT Team Leader contacts Crisis Counseling Team Members to serve the school

STEP 5
CRT Team Leader contacts School Administrator; CRT ready to help

Following Crisis, CRT Team Leader contacts AEA Regional Administrator for Summary/Debriefing

STEP 6
INTRODUCTION

When any individual within a school becomes aware of the death of a student or staff member via homicide, suicide, accidental death, or their death following an illness, it should be the responsibility of that individual to immediately call the principal and inform him/her of all the known facts regarding the death. At this point the principal must verify the fact that a death has occurred and do everything possible to ascertain the facts. Until the information is verified it is important that student or staff avoid rumors that create undue stress. Once the death has been officially confirmed, the principal will then contact the AEA Regional Administrator who will notify the Crisis Response Team. If the death is discovered outside of school hours, in the evening or late at night, the principal should notify the faculty. During the principal’s call to the faculty, staff will be informed that there will be a change in the procedure of the normal school day and a time will be established for all staff to meet prior to the start of school.

The following pages list the 14 Steps the building principal should review in dealing with a traumatic event.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSITION OF THE BUILDING CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM</th>
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<td>Members of the Building Crisis Response Team to be present at the next day meetings might include:</td>
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<td>• CRT team members assigned to the school</td>
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<td>• AEA staff assigned to the school</td>
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<td>• Crisis Response Team members</td>
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<td>• Other professionals and clergy from the community.</td>
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<td>A prearranged method of notifying all team members needs to be formalized in advance in order to allow team members maximum preparation time.</td>
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NOTIFICATION OF OTHER PEOPLE

Parents of students who were best friends, longtime classmates, or former classmates may need to be notified of the death prior to informing the school staff and student body. These individuals may require immediate assistance. The best practice for students who fall in this category is to notify their parents and give some suggestions on how to help, so support can be offered at home. These students should, if not previously notified, be taken aside privately as they come to school the following day and be informed of the death. There should be consideration for students and friends who attend other parochial or public schools.

AGENCY CONTACT

The principal, or designee, should contact the local mental health center, notify them of the death/suicide, and inform them of the possibility that referrals may increase from the school. Community agencies that may have been involved with the student or family, i.e., Social Services or other involved private service providers, should also be notified and may provide additional support for the family. A list of community agencies and referral sources need to be developed prior to any event for distribution to the Crisis Response Team members and staff.
PRINCIPAL’S 14-STEP CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

**STEP #1**

Call the AEA Regional Administrator, name: ____________________________, Phone: ____________________________. The Regional Administrator will activate the Crisis Response Team for your building.

**STEP #2**

Set a time before the start of the school day to meet with the Crisis Response Team prior to meeting with the entire faculty.

**Purpose**

1. Facts of the traumatic death.
2. Agenda for the day.
3. Agenda for faculty meeting and an informational sheet on the death.
4. Announcement to students.
5. Review best ways to respond to the death.

**STEP #3**

1. Notification—Phone Tree, prepared at the beginning of each school year.
2. Sensitivity of staff members.
3. Administrator may follow the deceased student’s schedule.

**SYSTEM RESPONSE TO TRAUMATIC DEATH OR SUICIDE NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

When a suicide, sudden death, or traumatic event occurs after hours, the principal, or designee, should notify as soon as possible all building staff and the AEA Regional Administrator who will see that Crisis Response Team members are notified. The superintendent, other building principals, (particularly of those schools where the siblings of the deceased student attend, or had attended) bus drivers, and non-certified staff should also be notified. A telephone tree is a helpful method to accomplish this task. These procedures will allow teachers the necessary time to deal with their own feelings so they are in a better position to help students. This call also informs the staff there will be a meeting before school the next day. Do not leave this message on a staff member’s answering machine. Ask them to return your call so that you can personally deliver the news. The administrator may wish to contact pastors, clergy, and community services to be involved in the meetings and the opportunity to be present during the school day to respond to student needs.

**SENSITIVITY TO STAFF MEMBERS**

The person contacting staff about the death should be sensitive to staff members who might need special support. The reasons for support are: 1) they were close to the deceased student, 2) they recently had to discipline the student, 3) in the case of a suicide, they had prior knowledge of a possible suicide attempt, 4) they observed events which they later learned were indicative of the student’s suicidal intent, or 5) they had been too busy to take time for the student when the student indicated a need to talk prior to suicide. Private interviews should be arranged with any teacher who had prior knowledge the student was suicidal. The administrator may wish to visit classes of the deceased student or follow the student’s normal schedule. Principals should also be prepared to call in substitutes for teachers who are on the crisis response team or need time out of their classroom to compose themselves.

**STEP #4**

Identify a team leader who will orchestrate the activities of all of the helping persons (and students) over the next several days. This person will be the “hub” of information and, in many instances, may be a counselor, principal, or secretary.
STEP #5
Direct a staff member to immediately go to the deceased student’s locker, remove the contents, and bring the belongings to the principal. This needs to be completed prior to the students coming to school since in some instances students may remove the deceased’s property, which rightfully belongs to the parents.

STEP #6
Direct a staff member to pull the deceased student’s cumulative folder to determine what other schools the deceased attended. The principal should call the other school(s) and inform them of the event that has occurred.

STEP #7
Identify a Support Center area in the building where students may come for support and counseling. In some instances, more than one room should be made available to accommodate additional students. It is more effective to keep groups relatively small. Usually the support area should be close to the guidance office or the main office to facilitate communications between guidance and administrative staff.

STEP #8
Decide with the Crisis Response Team what will be reviewed at the mandatory all-staff meeting.

STEP #9
Prepare an announcement to be read to the students. The most effective system of delivery is having teachers read the announcement to their class. Crisis team members can assist teachers who may have difficulty reading the message.

Note: It is important to have a central spokesperson for all announcements to students. By the time students reach school following a death or suicide, many will have heard differing versions about what happened. The presence of a strong, caring, and supportive authority figure (i.e., the principal) sharing information during this stressful time is important.

STEP #10
Direct a staff member to collect funeral arrangement information and to prepare details for student/faculty attendance at the visitation and funeral. When details are final, announcement should be made to staff and students.

Note: It may be important to have faculty members present during the entire visitation period to assist the funeral director in handling distraught children and teens.

Designate one secretary who will know how to reach the principal throughout the day, so that the principal can respond to any emergency/administrative situations that may develop.

continued
STEP #11
Call and/or visit the parents as early as possible to express the school’s and your condolences. Visiting the parents is encouraged, and the principal should take along a staff member who has been well acquainted with the student. Inform the parents that the Crisis Response Team would be available to meet with the parents within the home if they wish to discuss any questions or concerns.

STEP #12
Consider sending a letter home with students describing the loss, how it was handled at school, and what parents can do to help their child. Sample letters are attached.

STEP #13
Following the funeral, begin to bring closure by encouraging teachers to resume regular classroom activities as quickly as is appropriate.

On the day following the funeral, the principal should consider making the following closure statement to all students and faculty (this is done the day following because many of the deceased student’s closest friends will not have returned to school the day of the funeral):

May I have your attention please; I wish to thank each of you, students and faculty, for the support you have shown each other during the past few days. The example you have shown is a positive and healthy one and provides us the opportunity to work together toward strengthening our relationships with each other. Guidance staff remains available if you should wish to talk with a counselor. (Any additional comments from the family that have been passed on to the principal might be shared at this point.) Thank you for your attention.

STEP #14
In order to address the needs of the staff, a debriefing should be scheduled at the end of the school day. The debriefing is an attempt to allow individuals to express their grief by discussing experiences, reactions, and feelings to the trauma. The purpose of the debriefing is to provide group cohesiveness and help individuals understand ways to deal with the effects of a crisis and regain personal control. The crisis response staff will facilitate the debriefing; the principal is encouraged to act only as a participant.
PRINCIPAL’S CHECKLIST

☐ Verified factual information with the appropriate authorities.

☐ Called AEA Regional Administrator to arrange a meeting with the Crisis Response Team before school.

☐ Instructed a staff member to remove locker contents from deceased student’s locker.

☐ Designated a counseling support center in the building.

☐ Worked up a fact sheet regarding the death to be presented to the building staff.

☐ Directed staff member to review student’s cumulative folder and notified other school principals as needed.

☐ Composed an announcement to the students.

☐ Designated a staff member to collect funeral arrangement information.

☐ Informed students/staff of funeral arrangements.

☐ Directed a staff member to remove student’s name from all mailing lists, including the district’s central office.

☐ Visited parents.

☐ Held mid-day meeting with Crisis Response Team to assess response activities.

☐ Contacted clergy who will be conducting funeral services.

☐ Held after-school staff meeting.

☐ Met with Crisis Response Team at end of the day to review day’s activities, reviewed list of “at risk” students and planned for the next day’s activities.

☐ Determine the appropriateness of a debriefing with the Crisis Response Team.
ROLE OF PRINCIPAL AND CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM
AT THE MANDATORY ALL STAFF MEETING

Prior to the commencement of school following the death of a student or staff member, the principal shall have an
all-staff meeting. Generally, the principal will have approximately thirty minutes to meet with staff. In addition to the
“before school” meeting, it is important to hold an “after school” meeting to discuss the day’s events and to talk about
any students the faculty has concerns about.

**STEP #1**
Principal will announce a before-school all-staff mandatory meeting.

**STEP #2**
Principal introduces Crisis Response Team members.

**STEP #3**
Principal and the Crisis Response Team members inform teachers and non-certified staff what is expected of
them and review accompanying informational materials. Also, all known public facts that have been confirmed by
a reliable source regarding the student should be shared with the staff.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND THE NEWS MEDIA**
As a general rule, school district personnel may not be interviewed during the school day or periods of extra-
curricular activities by anyone other than school district officials, regarding school business. School district
personnel, while on the school district grounds, shall refer requests they receive to be interviewed or provide
information to the news media, to the administrative office in their building. The media should not be allowed
in the school and should not be allowed to interview students. However, the superintendent should
designate one person to be the media liaison to keep them informed of factual information from the school.

It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to develop administrative regulations regarding this policy.

**STEP #4**
Inform staff what announcement will be made to the students and when and how the announcement will be made.

**STEP #5**
Principal announces a mandatory faculty meeting after school to review the day’s events. This allows an opportunity
to receive feedback from faculty, to answer questions, and to review the next day’s expectations. A debriefing may
be arranged with the Crisis Response Team if the principal and CRT determine it would be appropriate.
Consideration should be given to time constraints, because a debriefing would require at least one hour to
complete.

**STEP #6**
Answer any questions from the staff and/or requests staff have at this time.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

The Crisis Response Team from the AEA is responsible for assisting in the implementation of a response plan when called upon for any crisis that may affect the school. The crisis response team is generally composed of members unattached to the school and are usually without strong emotional ties to the students or staff. This allows them to make decision more objectively and counsel groups and support individuals to assist in restoring the emotional well-being of the school. (AEA staff who are assigned to the school, wish to be included as a team member, and feel able to assist with the response are encouraged to participate.) Upon notification of a traumatic event, AEA Crisis Response Team members should make the determination of availability and act as quickly as possible to clear their calendar, and make arrangements to meet with the principal. The Crisis Response Team will be available to provide the following services:

1. Work with the principal as a resource for information on coping with a traumatic event.
2. Be available at the before-school meeting for input and introductions.
3. Serve as a resource to teachers who may need assistance on conducting their classroom discussions or have questions of their own.
4. Work with small group counseling when appropriate.
5. Work individually with students and staff.
6. Identify high-risk students/staff who may need immediate support.
7. Provide assistance and referrals for students and staff who experience personal trauma relating to the loss.
8. Follow up on key individuals, such as friends and family of those who were close to the situation or victim.
9. Request further assistance from appropriate outside agencies.
10. Coordinate information and response with the family of the victim.
11. Offer parents affected by the event an opportunity to discuss their concerns and needs.
12. Coordinate any and all activities of response to the crisis.
13. Participation in the after-school meeting to assess the day's activities and comprise a list of students with immediate concerns.
14. Facilitate a debriefing for the staff.
NON-CERTIFIED STAFF ROLE

All building personnel are affected by the death of a student. Therefore, it is important to inform non-certified staff of their role in dealing with this tragic event.

**STEP #1**

All non-certified staff **should attend** the mandatory staff meeting to be informed of the death and the plans for the day.

**STEP #2**

Secretarial staff should review procedures for handling requests or calls from parents, news media, and others.

**STEP #3**

The guidance secretary should free guidance staff schedules for the day. Some counselors may direct the secretary to clear their schedules for several days, so they can best respond to this situation.

**STEP #4**

Non-certified support staff should give the names of any students they are concerned about to the principal who can then refer the names to counselors and the Crisis Response Team.
TEACHER’S ROLE

Teachers play a vital role in helping students deal with their feelings regarding the death of a student or staff member. It is important for teachers to review the information provided to them by the crisis team.

**STEP #1**

Attend all-staff mandatory meetings and review any available information.

**STEP #2**

Allow the expressions of grief. Acknowledge and encourage students to express their feelings of loss, anger, sadness, etc. Tell students that if they would like to talk with someone about their feelings, they may go to the counselor’s office. There will be trained staff available for them to talk with, whether in an ongoing small group, or in individual meetings. If a student is visibly upset, ask another student to accompany them to the counselor’s office or support center. Keep a keen eye on students who were friends of the deceased student; refer them to the counselors’ office if they seem particularly upset, agitated, or withdrawn.

**STEP #3**

If the death was by suicide, emphasize this tragedy as an **error in judgment**. Stress that suicide is not an acceptable way for healthy people to deal with stress, loss, conflict, or depression. Suicide occurs following a period when the person was severely troubled and is completely unable to deal with the present or to face the future. Do not treat the situation as an illogical event, a total surprise, or an unexplainable happening. Emphasize that something was seriously wrong, and unfortunately, the young person did not have the resources or see alternatives for making things better. It is important to emphasize the dysfunctional nature of suicide so that young people see that there are healthy, constructive ways to deal with problems and stresses—even overwhelming ones—if a person can share and seek help to lighten the burdens. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help.

**STEP #4**

Channel names of high risk students to the guidance office, now or as the week progresses. Teachers are to be particularly alert for students who appear especially upset (i.e., no emotion, continued sobbing, repeatedly asking the same questions, etc.).

**STEP #5**

If you have specific concerns or questions, set a time before the start of the school day to meet with the Crisis Response Team prior to the staff meeting.
GUIDANCE AND AEA SUPPORT STAFF ROLE

The building guidance and AEA support staff should take the responsibility of gathering information about student/staff reaction to the death and act as a “hub of information.”

**STEP #1**

Identify school staff who were close to the deceased and may need extra support (e.g., a teacher who had a special helping relationship with the student, had the student in class, or has a sibling in class).

Start a list of “high risk” students in need of extra support. These could include: close friends of the deceased student, relatives, students in the same activities or clubs of the deceased student, neighbors of the deceased student, students with other stressors (e.g., troubled youth and those who are quiet and withdrawn), students identified by faculty, students identified by other students, “suicidal” students, students with unresolved grief or loss (e.g., family member has committed suicide, divorce situations, recent moves), and students with “guilt” feelings.

**STEP #2**

Guidance staff should briefly meet with all identified “high risk” students and with any students who are referred by staff. Decide what, if any, interventions are appropriate (triage). Options could include: (a) brief supportive counseling with guidance or AEA support staff and (b) grief group. The grief group should automatically be formed the first day, and it may run all day. The focus is on memories of the deceased student and grief work. For junior high students, two groups typically are formed, one male and one female.

**STEP #3**

Identify students who are absent during the day who may be “at risk” and inform parents of your concern for them. This may include those students who have dropped out or transferred.

**STEP #4**

For students who request to leave school because of their grief reaction:

a. Encourage students to try and stay at school.

b. Release students to parents or an adult designated by the parent. Encourage the parent not to leave the child alone during the day.

c. Provide parents with guidelines on how to manage grief and a brief listing of community resources. (See Appendix.)

d. Let each student know that you expect him/her to return to school the next day.

e. Check to see if the students return the next day and briefly check with them to see how they are doing. If a student has not returned, contact his/her parents to check to see how he/she is doing. Offer your assistance to the parents and/or student.

**STEP #5**

At the end of the first day, the Crisis Response Team members should meet to update themselves and review the list of “high risk” students. At the end of one week, review the status of “high risk” students on the list. Determine which students may need to be referred to community mental health services.

continued
STEP #6
Discuss the role the guidance/AEA staff will provide at the funeral and memorial service. After the funeral, assist the building staff in moving toward a "business as usual" atmosphere as soon as possible. (An announcement will be made by the principal regarding continued availability of guidance staff.)

STEP #7
Carefully review with the principal and other Crisis Response Team members the memorial requests for the deceased student.
SUGGESTIONS FOR CRT MEMBERS SERVING
AT THE THREE DIFFERENT BUILDING LEVELS

ELEMENTARY:

1. Teachers at the elementary level are very involved in the crisis with students in their own classrooms. They need a lot of support and opportunities for breaks from the class. Encourage them to take a break by suggesting a specific time when you will be there to give them a few minutes away. Work with administration, also, on the importance of providing breaks for staff.

2. A lot of grief work gets done in the classroom. The “family” environment promotes sharing and discussion. Elementary students are very open and ask a lot of questions about what happened and what will happen.

3. Processing of the student’s belongings takes place within the classroom with all the other students. Many times, classmates will want to finish the deceased student’s papers, drawings, etc. so the papers can be given to the parents.

4. With elementary students there is a lot of touching and hugging. The students need this not only for themselves but they want to give it to others to comfort them.

5. It’s very important to differentiate between fact and fiction with these students.

6. A crisis response room is still very important at the elementary level even though there’s a lot of talk within the classroom. Some students really need to get away and talk to other adults. Sometimes it’s important, too, to have a support room for teachers or parents.

7. Calling all affected families when a death has occurred is very helpful. Consider calling the parents of all fifth graders if a fifth grade teacher has died, for example. Feedback from parents indicates this effort helps them to talk with their child about what has happened and to prepare them for what is to come.

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

1. This might be a student’s first experience with the real death of someone they know. A middle schooler’s first reaction is very emotional.

2. Sometimes you see some pretty unusual reactions in pre-adolescents. (Laughing hysterically, etc.)

3. Students at this age are often immobilized by what has happened.

4. Middle schoolers often become very possessive of the person who has died. If you aren’t that person’s friend this week – you’re out and you shouldn’t be in the crisis response room.

5. Students at this age also have great difficulty with problem solving in a crisis situation – managing issues like what can be done to help, or what to say to the family, etc. Often the Crisis Team members need to help with direction and suggestions.

6. Middle schoolers don’t accept strangers well at first, preferring to talk to people they know until they establish a connection.

7. Sometimes they have difficulty with upset to the building routine during a crisis. They expect math to be in their math room, not turn it into a crisis response room for students.

8. Parents tend to rush to school and stay there, very concerned and protective about their children. They need to be encouraged to let the child stay at school and work with the Crisis Team members, or to take the child home, if necessary.

continued
9. There is more parent support at the visitation and funeral, so students aren't left to process the experience without help.

10. Middle schoolers also need lots of “coaching” on what is appropriate behavior throughout the time of the visitation and funeral (how to dress, what to say, etc.). See “Funeral Guidelines.”

HIGH SCHOOL:
1. Be aware of “touching” taboo. Don’t assume they want hugs, etc.

2. There is a lot more awareness regarding death and dying because of their maturity and experiences. There are classes offered that deal specifically with these topics within their course selections. However, there are many differences between the maturity of freshmen and seniors.

3. They are quick to organize and want to do something to help. They can also be quite stubborn about how they want things done and do not want much adult input.

4. High school youth are very mobile. They are not as easy to access as younger students because they frequently have themselves “called out” or gather at the home of one of the classmates. It’s important to know where they’ve gone, that an adult is present, and for a Crisis Team member to make a home visit as needed.

5. They have intense feelings about fairness – all deaths should be recognized in the same way regardless of who the person is. (Moment of silence, announcements, etc.)

6. Be aware of involved students who may not have arrived at school yet because of their schedules. Be sure to get the information to everyone.

7. High school students may seek out a favorite person (adult) rather than make use of the crisis response room or one of the Crisis Team members.

8. Keep a close watch on the media so they don’t take advantage of grieving students. Do crowd control.

9. Be careful about having the correct facts to help deal with rumors and rumor control. This can be a big problem.

10. At the visitation, Crisis Team members being present may be important for student support. Funeral attendance by team members may be decided on a case-by-case basis.

11. Counseling staff needs to do more follow up with the most affected students long after the incident has passed. Be sure that building counselors get the names of students they need to see so students have a lot of support.

12. Provide education to the general staff about the signs of suicidal thinking and depression with each crisis. The level of risk increases for a time with each incident for those students who are already at risk. Teachers need to know what to look for and where to send students that raise concern.

13. O.P.P (Other People’s Problems). Some students feel a need to get involved whenever anybody is having a problem. They may not be directly affected by the crisis but feel they must be involved.
Checklists

Team Leader
Staff Meeting
Student Schedule
Response Room
Response Room Sign-in
Sheet Response Team
Debriefing
TEAM LEADER CHECKLIST

Name/Team: ___________________________ Student: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________ School: ___________________________

Principal/Phone: ___________________________ Team Rep/Phone: ___________________________

☐ Date/time of Crisis Team notification:

________________________________________

☐ Description of the crisis incident:

________________________________________

☐ Date/time of incident:

________________________________________

☐ Who was involved?

________________________________________

☐ Hospital information:

________________________________________

☐ Information verified by SRO/police/family:

________________________________________

☐ Family Information:

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☐ Family contact with whom the team leader is communicating:

Name: ____________________________ Relationship: ____________________________
Home Number: ____________________________
Other Numbers: ____________________________

☐ Identify other schools that may be impacted. Notify the school(s) involved and discuss deploying additional team resources.

☐ Items to arrange with the school principal:

• Determine “what we know” and prepare a statement to communicate to staff and students:

• Notify staff of the incident by phone tree/staff meeting.

• Identify and notify buildings/personnel affected by the crisis: (previous schools, custodial staff, traveling staff, bus driver, clerical staff & paras, nurse, etc):

• Staff meetings (before and/or after school) arranged and agenda established.
• Accurate class lists/student schedule obtained
• Families of classroom/homeroom notified
• Remove cumulative file from active drawer per district policy
• Student’s name pulled from system and all class and calling lists
• Announcement to be read in classroom prepared and distributed to teachers
• Arrange for coverage of classrooms, if needed.
• Arrangements to follow student schedule:

  crisis team member assigned

• Arrange for a response room and location(s):

  crisis team member assigned

• Arrange to remove student belongings with an administrator from all locations (locker, gym locker, art room, band room, etc.):

  crisis team & administrator assigned

continued
• Prepare a letter home to parents about the crisis. Prepare and include developmentally appropriate materials on grief and loss

☐ Establish funeral and visitation arrangements:
  • Date/Time/Location:


• Notify staff and students of arrangements, as appropriate.


• Assign staff to cover visitation (and/or funeral, as appropriate):


☐ Provide resources for the crisis room
  • News articles about incident
  • Handouts on grief and loss, if appropriate
  • Funeral/visitation information, if available
  • Funeral attendance guidelines
  • Memorial guidelines
  • Location of second crisis room

☐ Arrange lunches for crisis team staff.

☐ Review student belongings with administrator.

☐ Gather cards, letters to family and student belongings and return to family with school administrator.

☐ Arrange for a noninvolved party to set up and facilitate a debriefing for the team.
STAFF MEETING CHECKLIST

Name:__________________________________________

Student:________________________________________

Date:___________________________________________

School:_________________________________________

INITIAL STAFF MEETING: CRT Member(s)

☐ Statement of current facts:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

☐ Discuss procedures:
  • Discuss how announcement will be made to students.
  • Offer to have a crisis team member in classrooms if requested by teacher.
  • Review the procedure for following the student’s schedule. Introduce the response member who will do this
  • Distribute and review handouts pertaining to grief
  • Announce the location of crisis response room and importance of encouraging students who need support to come to the response room
  • Watch students over next several days and weeks; report concerns about specific students to counseling staff
  • Refrain from discussing death in religious terms
  • Review how to manage personal stress and grief (handout)
  • Review procedure for requesting funeral leave

☐ Resources:
  • Young People and Grief
  • Do’s and Don’ts
  • News articles
  • Location of first and back-up crisis rooms

FOLLOW-UP MEETING: CRT Member(s)

☐ Announce updated facts, funeral and visitation arrangements, etc.

☐ Review CRT activities to date

☐ Gather information from staff regarding high risk students

☐ Encourage staff to take care of themselves and one another

☐ Discuss CRT and school-level plans for the next few days

☐ Thank staff for their help

TURN THIS FORM IN TO THE CRISIS TEAM LEADER
STUDENT SCHEDULE CHECKLIST

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Student: _________________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________

School: __________________________________________________________

FOLLOW THE STUDENT’S SCHEDULE

☐ Get current copy of the student’s schedule.

☐ Critical details of the incident: What can be shared?

☐ Meet with teacher(s) ahead of time at the AM faculty meeting if possible.

☐ Arrive at each class ahead of time. Talk with the teacher about what needs to be done and what role the teacher wants to play.

☐ Make the announcement to the class(es).

☐ Discuss ways to handle grief.

☐ What can the class do as a whole (i.e.; make cards for the family)?

☐ Discuss with the class what to do with the student’s belongings/desk.

☐ Resources:

  • Funeral arrangements and how to prepare for the funeral
  • Memorials
  • News articles
  • Location of crisis room

TURN THIS FORM IN TO THE CRISIS TEAM LEADER
RESPONSE ROOM CHECKLIST

Name: ____________________________________________
Date: ____________________________________________
Student: __________________________________________ 
Date: ____________________________________________

☐ Crisis Response Room Leader:

☐ Assessment Facilitator (if needed):

  • Assess students as they come in the room
  • Assist with groupings of students

☐ Names of Crisis Response Room Facilitators:

☐ Supplies for the response room:
  • Kleenex
  • Water jug and cups
  • Name Tags
  • Sign-in sheets
  • Paper
  • Building passes
  • Markers/pens
  • Post the Grief Recovery Process

☐ Review the Grief Recovery Process with the response facilitators

☐ Give an attendance report to the school secretary each period/hour

☐ Observe students to ensure their individual needs are being met (i.e., being sent back to class when appropriate, allowing to stay in the room when appropriate, sending to individual counselor, sending home to parent, etc.)

☐ Call parents if a given student is significantly impacted by the event

☐ Check in with the team leader for periodic updates

☐ Resources:
  • Funeral attendance guidelines
  • News articles
  • Location of second crisis room
  • Memorial guidelines

☐ Ensure that building counselor or administrator gets a list of those students who present risk for later follow-up

☐ Gather cards and letters written to the family and get to the crisis team leader

☐ Give crisis team leader the sign-in sheet and number of students seen (see attached form).

TURN THIS FORM IN TO THE CRISIS TEAM LEADER
# RESPONSE ROOM SIGN-IN SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>From what class?</th>
<th>Time In</th>
<th>Time Out</th>
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CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM DEBRIEFING CHECKLIST

Name: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________
Student: ______________________________
School: ______________________________

DEBRIEF

☐ Set up the time, date and location of the debriefing and invite all team participants.

☐ Names of Crisis Response Team members in attendance:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ Facilitate the “Crisis Debriefing Protocol” for the CRT members

☐ Discuss successes and problems

☐ Discuss suggested changes and recommendations

NOTES:
________________________________________________________________________
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TURN THIS COMPLETED FORM IN TO THE CRISIS TEAM LEADER
MAJOR ACCIDENTS, DISASTERS, DISRUPTIONS

Team Leader Responsibilities

Team Responsibilities

Student Release Record

Working with Parents

Working with Students
TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES FOLLOWING A MAJOR ACCIDENT, DISASTER, OR DISRUPTION

- Act as liaison with authorities, AEA personnel, CRT, school personnel, as well as outside personnel.

- Help plan mandatory staff meeting after situation is stabilized.

- Monitor situation and have available additional personnel (counselors, team reps, psychologists) to assist in defusing and reuniting students with parents.

- Assist in dealing with media and assist in preparing media releases.

- Monitor situation and assign extra duties as needed.

- Plan for crisis counseling to be available in evening at a site to be arranged, if school is unavailable or inappropriate.

- Lead CRT defusing and coordinate follow-up debriefing activities.

- If school is closed, before it reopens, plan and hold open house so parents and students can visit school before classes begin.

- Plan and hold a defusing meeting for teachers.

- Provide a list of students/staff who may need additional assistance, as well as the name(s) of the building counselor(s) who need to be contacted regarding their duties for follow-up.
TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES FOLLOWING A MAJOR ACCIDENT, DISASTER OR DISRUPTION

- Community emergency personnel are in charge. Cooperate and provide assistance.

- Set up headquarters for CRT to meet.

- Assist in setting up room for parents.

- Assist in setting up room for media.

- Keep box of activity-oriented materials, including Grief Recovery Process materials, pre-printed memory sheets, crayons, paper, markers, etc. Included will be informational handouts for staff and parents related to dealing with traumatized children. Designate a CRT member to be responsible for these materials.

- Keep records of what children were released to parents. Use attached form.

- Circulate between headquarters and staff and students, if possible.

- Circulate between classrooms and assist teachers in maintaining calm.

- Monitor phones.

- Obtain list of absent students and/or staff members.

- Defuse students in small groups (within classroom groups, if possible). Refer to page 30 for detailed procedure.

- Plan and meet with parents to defuse and provide information regarding reuniting with children. Refer to page 29 for detailed procedure.

- Prepare information to be released to staff, students, and parents.

- Choose and/or plan follow-up activities for Day 2 for use in the classroom to help students process the incident.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Released to</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Adult Signature</th>
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ROLES FOR CRT MEMBERS IN WORKING WITH PARENTS FOLLOWING A MAJOR ACCIDENT, DISASTER OR DISRUPTION

1. Provide facts about crisis situations.

2. Counsel parents in a separate cordoned-off area. Explain why it is necessary for them to be separated from their children and reassure that parents will be reunited with children in an organized way as soon as possible.

3. Inform parents of how students are being cared for and/or protected.

4. Answer parents’ questions and concerns honestly and factually.

5. Provide support to parents.

6. Facilitate reuniting students with parents. Use sign out form.

7. Provide information concerning effects of trauma on children and provide information concerning how parents can facilitate adjustment.

8. Make contact with families who show poor adjustment or who seem particularly affected.

9. In the event of a major incident, refer to handouts for parents, as well as handouts regarding children’s responses to disaster.

10. Carefully consider whether or not it is appropriate for the parent of a victim to talk to/with students.
WORKING DIRECTLY WITH STUDENTS IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER

PREVENTING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
After a severe traumatic event, it is extremely important that students and staff who were directly affected, as well as others who were not as directly affected, be included in sessions for defusing and debriefing. The defusing process takes place immediately following a traumatic event and should NOT be considered optional for those who were directly affected. It is strongly recommended that they also participate in debriefing sessions, which are held several days (24 to 72 hours) later.

DEFUSING
Defusing is the ventilation of thoughts and emotions immediately following a tragic event. Follow-up debriefing activities are designed to promote the healthy resolution of emotions resulting from the event. The staff can be involved in the defusing/debriefing process for students, but students should not be included in the sessions held for staff. A counselor and/or CRT member will lead the sessions, which will provide students and staff an opportunity to talk with each other prior to leaving school that day. In the most optimal situation, parents will meet with one or more CRT members while the defusing sessions are taking place in the classrooms. However, if a parent wants to be present in the classroom with his/her child during the defusing process, he/she may be included.

DEFUSING STEPS
• Keep all members of a class together—groups of 15 to 25.
• Promote ventilation. Ask: What was the worst part for you? Where were you when it happened? Leaders will listen to responses and acknowledge them.
• Prepare students and parents for the following possible reactions:
  • Sleeplessness • Fear and anxiety
  • Lack of concentration • Nightmares
  • Nausea • Sweating
  • Crying • Numbness
  • Irritability • Withdrawal
  • Demanding Behavior • Clinging
• When working with elementary level students, DO NOT READ THE LIST OFF. Instead, talk about how they will have lots of different feelings and reactions. Explain that this is all very normal under these circumstances. Encourage the students to talk about their feelings and reactions to the disastrous situation. If students do NOT respond to the questions, the leader can share his or her own feelings and reactions to the disaster. Having students use crayons and paper might also be an effective way to get young children to express their feelings.
• Let students know they are normal.
• Give them suggestions for coping. For example, get lots of rest, eat well, talk with those they trust about what happened, and try to keep busy with the normal routine as much as possible.
• Let them know when follow-up will be provided.

DEBRIEFING
Debriefing sessions usually begin within 48 to 72 hours following the event. Crisis team members with certified training in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing will conduct debriefing sessions with students identified as high risk.
TEACHER HANDOUTS

Crisis Response - All Levels
Young People and Grief
Helping a Student with Grief
Typical Questions Students May Ask
Funeral Attendance Guidelines for Students
Grief Information for Teachers
Factors Which Indicate High Risk
School Staff Reasons for Referral
Taking Care of Yourself
TEACHER HANDOUT – CRISIS RESPONSE ALL LEVELS

1. Counselors and members of the Crisis Response Team (CRT) will be available for individual and group support in the Crisis Response Room. PLEASE LET STUDENTS KNOW WHERE THEY CAN GO FOR HELP and follow the directions given for releasing them and monitoring their coming and going to these rooms.

2. Please be especially observant of those students who experience a high level of distress and/or whose behavior indicates a strong grief reaction (see description of possible grief reactions in Young People and Grief). Be aware that the current death may trigger delayed grief responses in students who have had other losses. Bring or have those students escorted by another student to the counseling center or response room. Names of students who should be monitored or seen for follow-up support must be given to counselors.

3. Counselors and members of the CRT are available to come to classes to talk about common reactions to loss, to provide support, to answer questions - whatever you might need. Please contact your principal if you would like someone to come to your class.

4. If students ask questions or want to talk about their feelings, it is usually good to talk about it. This discussion is especially appropriate during “home room” period. There are no “magic” words that should be said to students. It is very important to be sincere, warm, and empathetic. If you did not know the student, it should be acknowledged through a statement such as, “I didn’t know John, but I’d like to know about him. Please tell me about him.” During the discussion, some things you might include are:

   a. Allow the students to talk about the deceased person and their relationship/experiences with him/her.
   b. Let them know that people grieve in different ways. All responses are OK—there is no “normal” way to feel.
   c. Talk about what they can do with their feelings:
      • Talk with people they trust
      • Encourage talking with parent/guardian
      • Inform them of the support room and give permission to seek out help.
   d. Discuss what they can do to help each other
      • Reach out to each other/listen to each other
      • Accompany an upset friend to talk to someone
      • Let an adult know if a friend is very upset and might need to be sought out
   e. Students could be encouraged to write letters or cards which can be brought to the counseling center/group support room for delivery to the family.
   f. Encourage students to talk to their parents/clergy regarding religious and spiritual beliefs of death. Respect each student’s religious background.

5. State and reinforce the stability of a routine. “School will go on.” Allow appropriate time for sharing of feelings and discussion, but return to scheduled instructional activities each day.

6. Expect students’ ability to concentrate to be affected. Eliminate, shorten, and structure assignments for a few days. Use judgment in giving tests/quizzes until 24-48 hours have passed and adjust expectations.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND GRIEF

The grieving process is a normal, natural, and healing result of loss; and pain is to be expected. Young people of all ages exhibit grief and reactions. Guilt, anxiety, anger, fears, and sadness may be universal, and the expressions of these emotions may vary from day to day. Helping a young person and yourself through this difficult time may often feel overwhelming; however, knowledge of common reactions to loss may help you recognize behavior for what it is—grieving.

POSSIBLE GRIEF REACTIONS:

• Anger.

• Aggression/acting out: starting fights, outbursts of temper, drop in grades, change of peer affiliation.

• Explosive emotions: gentle tears, wrenching sobs, extremes in behavior.

• Physiological changes: fatigue, trouble sleeping, lack of appetite, headaches, stomach pains.

• Idealization of the deceased person.

• Sadness/emptiness/withdrawal: overwhelmed by feelings of loss when realizes person is not coming back; feels extremely vulnerable.

• Guilt/self-blame: “If only . . .”; “Why didn’t I . . .”; feels responsible for the loss; seeks self-punishment.

• Disorganization: restless, unable to concentrate, uncontrollable tears, difficulty focusing.

• Relief: natural feeling after long illness; can be difficult to admit; may think they are the only one and so feels guilty.

• Lack of feelings: protection from pain; can be a form of numbness; may be difficult to admit and may generate guilt.

HOW TO HELP A YOUNG PERSON WHO IS EXPERIENCING GRIEF:

• Permit or encourage the young person to talk about the person who has died. At the moment of loss and especially after the funeral, this is a vital part of the healing process. Often we want to avoid this important first step of acceptance and of healing.

• Use the terms “died/dead/death” rather than phrases like “passed away,” or “taken from us.” Young children can misinterpret these words and be afraid to go to sleep or that they also may be taken. Give an honest explanation for the person’s death, avoiding cliches or easy answers. Straightforward, gentle use of words helps a person confront the reality of the death.

• Explain and accept that everyone has different reactions to death at different times. The reaction might not hit until the funeral or weeks later.

• Reassure the young person that his/her grief feelings are normal. There is no “right” way to react to a loss. Give permission to cry. Let them know it’s okay not to cry if the young person does not typically react in that way.

• Do not attempt to minimize the loss or take the pain away. Phrases like “Don’t worry, it will be okay,” “He had a good life,” or “He is out of pain” are not helpful. Grief is painful. There must be pain before there can be acceptance and healing. It is very difficult to do, but most helpful to acknowledge the person’s pain and permit them to live with it without trying to take it away or make it “better.”

continued
• Encourage the young person to talk about their feelings. Encourage communication first in family, but also be aware of other support people such as clergy, trusted adult friends, trusted peers.

• **LISTEN:** Listen with your heart. Listening to the feelings of the young person is most important. Listen through the silences. You just being there, showing you care by your listening is more important than knowing what to say or even saying anything at all.

• Help the young person decide about attending the funeral. The funeral can be a way to say goodbye, but abide by the young person’s wish and express understanding if he/she chooses not to go.

**A GRIEVING PERSON’S NEEDS:**

• To cry.

• To be held.

• To talk.

• To be listened to.

• To feel caring around them to be with people they care about.

• To understand how others may react.
HELPING A STUDENT WITH GRIEF

DO

• allow the new loss issue to take precedence with classmates.
• trust your instincts.
• initiate discussion of the loss issue if students do not bring it up.
• encourage students to attend the visitation, funeral, and memorial service.
• consider an activity such as writing letters to the family.
• emphasize positive forces in the student’s life; not everything is bad news.
• realize that not talking about loss doesn’t make it go away.
• encourage classmates to be a support system for the grieving student and his family.
• communicate the knowledge that all feelings are okay and need to be expressed.
• recognize that laughter and play don’t mean the student did not love or care about the person who died.
• remember the four T’s in sympathy: Talk, Touch, Tears, and Time.

DON’T

• give advice, be judgmental, criticize, blame.
• do most of the talking.
• lie or tell half-truths to others.
• use euphemisms like gone away, resting, asleep; do say died and dead.
• be afraid to admit to a student that you don’t know all the answers.
• avoid the student.
• minimize the loss.
• change the subject.
• use clichés, such as “Oh well, we all have to die sometime.”
• say, “I know how you feel.”
• believe a young person thinks the same as an adult.
• attempt to become a substitute for the deceased person.
• think that a student’s busy activity level means s/he is being disrespectful or disinterested; s/he may simply need to move.
TYPICAL QUESTIONS STUDENTS MAY ASK

Why does God let these bad things happen?
You know, different people have different beliefs about God and why things happen. Perhaps your family could talk about that.

It’s not fair.
You’re right, it’s not fair. Some things in life happen that just aren’t fair and this is one of them. It isn’t fair when kids die.

Why did it have to happen to her/him?
I don’t know. We try to make sense out of life and sometimes it just doesn’t fit.

I don’t know how I can live without him/her?
It’s really hard when people close to us die and sometimes we feel like we can’t go on. But that is something we have to do.

I feel so empty inside.
It is a really empty feeling. Sometimes it feels like you don’t know what to do. What are some of the things you’ve done since you’ve found out about this?

Why do I feel so awful and those other kids don’t seem to care very much?
It sounds like you are really sad and you miss her/him. But other people have different feelings and reactions. And that’s okay for people to have whatever feelings they have.

It hurts so much. Why does there have to be so much pain?
It hurts really badly when people you care about die. It may seem like the pain will last forever, but it doesn’t. Over time things tend to get better.

I can’t believe this happened. I was just with him/her yesterday.
It’s really hard to make sense of this. And sometimes the suddenness makes it even more difficult and hard to believe.

It’s hard to come to school and listen to the teachers talk about math. I could care less about math.
It’s hard to focus on regular day-to-day stuff when your mind and heart are really torn up.

I hate him/her for leaving me. Why did he/she have to die? We were going to be together forever.
I can see that you are upset. All of your hopes and dreams have changed. In a way, it’s healthy to be angry about that.
FUNERAL ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

1. It is appropriate to dress up if you are planning to attend either the visitation or the funeral.

2. Visitation is meant to provide a time to support family members and honor the person who has died.

3. Generally, visits are brief but some families will plan a formal prayer service during the visitation.

4. At visitation, the casket will be present and may be open. It is customary to view the casket and/or body. Some families will have a “kneeler” so that individuals may offer a short prayer.

5. The body may not look like the person you remember. Some people may gently kiss or touch the body.

6. It is okay to view the casket in small groups and it is okay to talk quietly but it is best not to congregate around the casket. Move away to allow others the opportunity to pay their respects.

7. Some people like to leave flowers or other remembrances. If there is not a table for this purpose, it is best to leave them with the family. It is not appropriate to place remembrances inside the casket.

8. It is appropriate to greet family members and express your sorrow. A simple statement such as “I'm sorry for your loss” will let the family know that you care.

9. Funeral services vary according to the religious preference of the family. It is respectful to follow the religious customs. Arrive at the church or funeral home early to allow time to sign the guest book and be seated.

10. Attendance at the cemetery is optional but it is important to leave soon after the services at the gravesite to give the family a time of privacy.
GRIEF INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The response of a child to the death of a significant person may vary depending upon personal, family, and social factors. The grieving process does not always have discernible stages. Such factors as the closeness of the relationship, the time of preparation for the death, and the family’s response to the death may influence the nature, duration, and severity of the grief response. After the loss of a loved one, younger children may be reluctant to trust other adults for fear they too will die or go away. This confounds the teacher’s role in supporting the student.

The younger child may behave as if nothing is really wrong, hoping that they can convince themselves that death is a reversible process and the deceased will return. Often the signs are physical or behavioral in nature. Other signs of bodily distress might include: chronic worrying, lack of energy, and loss of appetite. The child may also demonstrate hostile reactions. There may be a looking to others or substituting that is designed to satisfy some physical or emotional need. There may be a concern that they have done something to cause the death or should have been more helpful while the person was alive.

Guidelines for Helping a Child

1. Encourage children to express their feelings but don’t push for too much or require that they do so.
2. Be honest. Answer questions truthfully and express your own emotions honestly.
3. Keep it simple. Discuss death in terms children can understand. Don’t give them more information than they can handle at their developmental level; ask them for their interpretation of what happened.
4. Be patient. Be aware that children may repeat the same questions as they seek reassurance and deal with confusion and fear.
6. Suggest some ways a child can memorialize the person such as planting in that person’s honor, drawing a special picture, or writing something about the person.
7. Accept the child’s feelings, perceptions, and reactions. Allow for differences of opinion, doubt, and questions.
8. Address the child’s concerns of guilt or that they may have caused the event.
9. Refer the child to other support people or services if necessary.
10. Prepare children for the continuation of their life. Reassure them that they will feel better after a time and that time differs from person to person. Children should be assured that, in time, they will be able to play and have fun and that doesn’t mean they love the person any less.
FACTORS WHICH INDICATE HIGH RISK

High risk individuals need to be identified and offered help.

These people include anyone who:

a. Participated in any way with a suicide or accident.

b. Knew of the suicide attempt or potential attempt and didn’t try to stop it.

c. Feels guilty about things they said or did to the deceased prior to the death.

d. Had recently punished or threatened to punish the deceased for some misdeed; did not take a suicide threat seriously, or had been too busy to talk to a victim who asked for help.

e. Were relatives, best friends, self-appointed therapists; were mentioned in a suicide note.

f. Identifies with the victim’s situation; has a history of suicidal threats or attempts; is desperate and now considers suicide a viable alternative. Adults and teens become distressed when they see demands becoming a threat or a problem to themselves; such distress can lead to depression—a state of intense sadness, hopelessness, or despair.
   * Although depression is the leading sign or symptom of suicide, the single best prediction is the occurrence and seriousness of a previous attempt.

g. High risk times include: anniversaries of a previous death, birthdays, holidays, expected graduation date, etc., of the deceased student; and the high risk student’s own birthday.

Research has shown that the following description represents a picture of the at-risk adolescent:

- One who has recently experienced a significant number of stressful events that converge.
- Receives little support from his or her family (poor communication, conflicts, alienation, inadequate love and affection). Chronic illness of a parent (especially depression).
- Exhibits difficulties academically (a disparity between their academic aspirations or those of significant others and their academic performance). Emotional instability, behavioral problems (substance use, acting out behavior), and physically (somatic complaints).

* Remember, you are not responsible for another person’s actions. Suicidal individuals ultimately must help themselves. What you can do is be as caring and supportive as possible.
SCHOOL STAFF REASONS FOR REFERRAL

The following guidelines are presented in an attempt to clarify school staff perception of situations in which consideration of referral is essential. The main difference between normal and serious reaction to critical incidents is one of degree rather than kind. Serious reactions are simply normal reactions taken to an extreme.

1. Cognitive Signs. A reaction may be considered serious when:
   • Slight disorientation has become the inability to tell one’s name, the date, or relate what has happened over the past 24 hours.
   • Too much concern over little things has become exclusive preoccupation with one idea.
   • Denial of the severity of the problem has become wholesale denial that a problem exists.
   • Visual or auditory flashbacks have become out-of-control hallucinations.
   • Self-doubt has become a feeling of unreality, disconnectedness, fear of “losing my mind.”
   • Difficulty in planning practical things has become the inability to carry out basic life functions.
   • Light confusion has become bizarre, irrational beliefs, and these form the basis for action.

2. Emotional Signs. A reaction may be considered serious when:
   • Crying has become uncontrolled hysteria.
   • Anger or self-blame has become fear or threats of harm to self or others.
   • Blunted emotional response or numbing has become complete withdrawal, with no emotional response.
   • Appropriate expression of despair or depression has become self-destructive.

3. Behavioral Signs. A reaction may be considered serious when:
   • Restlessness or excitement has become unfocused agitation.
   • Excessive talking or nervous laughter has become uncontrolled.
   • Frequent retelling of the incident has become continual or ritualistic.
   • Pacing, hand-wringing, or fist-clenching has become ritualistic or uncontrolled.
   • Disheveled appearance has, over time, become an inability to care for oneself.
   • Irritability has become destructive.
1. Recognize and acknowledge your own feelings of loss and grief. Contact your principal or the crisis response team leader. Substitutes can be arranged to take your class if needed.

2. Be realistic about what you can do. Maybe you need to take some time for yourself. Talk to someone you trust about your feelings.

3. Stick to a schedule as much as you can. It provides stability and the comfort of a normal routine when your feelings are out of control.

4. Give yourself permission to mourn. No matter what the nature of your relationship, there is loss. Give yourself the same latitude you give your students.

5. Let your principal know if you would like to attend the funeral so that a substitute may be found.

6. Be kind to yourself. You don’t have to “get it all together” right away. You don’t have to do it all, be strong for everyone, or take care of everything. Treat yourself with the same gentleness and understanding you would anybody else.
SUICIDE

Sample Announcement to Classroom

Classroom/Homeroom Discussion Guidelines

for Suicide Prevention
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO CLASSROOMS: DEATH BY SUICIDE

“(School) received sad news this weekend. One of our seniors, (Name), chose to end his own life. (Name) had just returned to (School) at the start of 2nd semester and was struggling greatly with overwhelming personal issues.

We are concerned about all of our students and want to help and support you personally as well as academically. Extra counselors are in the building today. If you would like to talk about this event or any kind of personal event affecting you, please stop in the Guidance Office. In homeroom this morning, your advisor will talk with you about places you and your friends can turn to for help if you ever find yourself feeling exceptionally overwhelmed by life.

Services will be…”

TEACHERS:
Several things to note:

If students ask for additional details regarding (Name)’s death, please refer them to one of the counselors. Don’t allow students to engage in discussing the details of (Name)’s death. Research indicates that we should not glamorize or provide too much public attention for this event. We will, however, openly talk with kids about suicide prevention – where to go for help and how to help a friend who is feeling exceptionally overwhelmed. You may want to use such phrasing such as….

• “He had personal issues that were unique to him and we’re not going to be able to make sense of what happened.”

• “This really isn’t the place to discuss the details of what happened or what was going on in (Name)’s life. If you need to talk about these things, please go to the Guidance Office.”

• “There are always places to go for help in solving problems; this may mean having to seek guidance from a trusted adult. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for a friend is connect him or her with an adult who is trained to help people sort things out.”
Objective:

To provide students with resources they can use when they or their friends are feeling exceptionally overwhelmed by life stressors.

Steps:

1. Do attendance and announcements as usual.
2. Reread the announcement from 1st hour, as some students may not have been in class.
3. Tell students that the adults at (School) care about them and want them to grow and develop in healthy ways. We want to help them learn life skills as well as academic skills.

   EXAMPLE:
   All of us at (School) are really concerned about students. We want you to grow and learn personally as well as academically. Part of what we all have to learn is that there is always a way to deal with personal issues in our lives. Sometimes people who are extremely overwhelmed by serious personal issues may have trouble seeing a way out of their problems. We want you to always know there are places you can go if you are feeling this way or if you think one of your friends is feeling this way.

4. Identify people or places young people can turn for help. Remind them that sometimes they need to seek out people who have special helping skills.

   EXAMPLE:
   There are a lot of people in your lives who are willing to help you when you have serious problems. Think of your friends, your family (parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents) and faith–based people (priests, rabbis, ministers). These people are all great sources of help. Sometimes, we need to find people with special helping skills such as counselors, social workers, or psychologists. We have these people here at school to help out.

5. Let students know that there are also anonymous ways of getting help for a friend.

   EXAMPLE:
   If you don’t feel comfortable seeing one of these people at school, there are other places to go.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO HEAR TODAY IS THAT THERE IS ALWAYS A PLACE TO TURN IF YOU OR ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS NEEDS HELP!
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS, LETTERS HOME

Sample Announcement to Classrooms: Death by Accident

Parent Communications

Sample Parent Letter: Student Death

Sample Letter to Parents: Staff Death

Sample Letter Home: Major Accident, Disaster, Disruption
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO CLASSROOMS: DEATH BY ACCIDENT

“We were deeply saddened to receive news of the death of one of our students, *(Name)*, who was a sophomore this year. *(Name)* died in a car accident last night at *(Street)*. His funeral services will be held *(Date, Time, Location)*. *(Name)* was involved in music and the visual arts at *(School)*. Our thoughts are with *(Name)*’s family and friends.

All of us at *(School)* care deeply for our students and always encourage you to make good choices that will help keep you safe.

As always, school counselors are willing to visit with students who are impacted by this event, whether because you know *(Name)* and his friends, or because this brings up memories of other events in your life.”

OR

“Students, may I have your attention please. Last night *(Name)*, from our junior class, died. This morning the faculty met to develop a plan to help all of us cope with this event. Your teacher has been given some suggestions on how to proceed with classroom activities today. Additionally, there will be special counseling available for any student who feels the need for some extra support. Counselors will be available in *(give location)* all day.

At any time during the day, please let your teacher know if you wish to see a counselor. We are all affected by this loss. Staff and students here are known for their caring ways. Today, I encourage all of you to be aware of your own feelings and be respectful of the feelings of others. Our thoughts go out to the family and friends of *(student’s name)*.”
PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

Parents will want information also when a death has occurred in the school. Depending on the nature of the emergency, the entire community may be affected. By issuing press/media statements you will meet some of the community’s need for information; however, special communications to parents may be extremely helpful in gaining their support for the school and in reaching satisfactory closure to the crisis.

1. Parent communications by phone:
   a. Use active listening skills to calm an upset parent. Do not allow scapegoating.
   b. Contact the parents of any student who has had a difficult time coping with the death and give suggestions on how to offer support at home.
   c. Reassure parents that the school is responding to the emergency and describe the response activities.

2. Guidelines for Written Communication to the Parents
   Depending on the impact of the death, a letter may be sent home with every student in the class or classes involved and in some cases with the entire school. This letter could include the following information.
   a. Information about the death that has occurred.
   b. What the children have been told.
   c. Grief reactions that parents might expect to see in their child.
   d. How to respond to their child.
   e. Resources available to parents.

3. Guidelines for Parent Meetings
   The general experience of school personnel holding large group or assembly meetings for parents has been that these meetings tend to add contagion to the crisis rather than to minimize the impact for the community. The recommendations for parent meetings are for small group meetings to be held off school premises, if possible, perhaps in neighborhood centers. Some schools have successfully conducted parent meetings by assigning small groups to classrooms and arranging for two facilitators for each group. If a meeting is held off campus, staff should attend the meetings to avoid scapegoating the school and to reassure parents that the school is responding to the emergency. Any parent meeting should be conducted during after-school hours.

   An alternative to group meetings may be to offer parents drop-in counseling during after-school hours. This arrangement should be offered for no more than one school week.
(Date)

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

All of us at (School) were saddened to receive news this morning of the death of (Name), one of our 7th graders. The AEA Crisis Response Team is assisting us in helping students deal with this news.

We all react in individual ways to this type of event. Things such as developmental level, our relationships with people impacted, our previous experiences of loss, and our personal perceptions of death impact how we deal with this event. We should expect, try to understand, and accept a variety of emotions and behaviors. The most important thing we should do is to be supportive and encourage discussion about the events, our feelings, and what we can do in response to it.

We encourage you as parents and caregivers to read over the following list of ways you can help your student deal with these events and to use them as you feel is appropriate.

**What Can I Do as a Parent?**

1. Be available and willing to discuss the events and honestly share your feelings about them.
2. Allow your student to express fears and feelings. Let him/her question things without being judgmental.
3. Maintain your daily routines as it offers students a sense of security.
4. Be present and watchful of your student in the days and weeks ahead. Watch for any changes in behavior. If you do notice changes, talk them over with a school counselor.
5. Give assurances of love, support, and safety.
6. Be patient. Students may express a variety of emotions within a short period of time.

The school counselors will be available in the days and weeks ahead. Please let us know how we can be of assistance to you and your family.

(add funeral arrangements if known)

Sincerely,

Principal
SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS: STAFF DEATH

(Date)

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

All of us at (School) were saddened to receive news this morning of the death of a longtime teacher, (Name). (Name) was recently diagnosed with several brain tumors and died this morning. In her years at (School), (Name) touched many students, parents, and staff lives.

Students and staff will react in different ways. We should expect, try to understand, and accept a variety of emotions and behaviors. The most important things we should do is to be supportive and to encourage discussion about the event, the feelings it gives rise to, and what are some ways that we can respond to it. Your child’s teacher notified his or her students of (Name)’s death at the end of the school day. We would encourage you as parents to talk further with your children this evening.

If you would like your child to visit with our school counselor, (Name) or school psychologist, (Name), please call our school office at (phone number) or send a note to your child’s teacher.

At this time we have not yet received information regarding funeral arrangements. We do anticipate that many of our staff members will want to attend the services. We are working to obtain substitute teachers who will help us cover student classrooms. If you may be able to come to school and help us in classrooms please call our office at (phone number) and give your name to our secretary, Mrs. (Name).

We know that you will join us in our concern, support, and sympathy for those involved in and affected by this incident. We also greatly appreciate your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Principal
SAMPLE LETTER HOME FOLLOWING A MAJOR ACCIDENT, DISASTER OR DISRUPTION

Dear Parents:

Today has been a tragic day and we are all affected by the great loss. As parents you may want to talk to your children about today's tragedies and their impact. Witnessing or even hearing of a traumatic incident may affect a child or adult in a variety of ways; therefore, it is very important that children be given ample opportunities to ask questions and to talk about their reactions to the incidents. Currently children may also have concerns about their safety and security and consequently may need reassurance.

When reacting to a traumatic incident, a child may display behaviors such as the following:

- Clings close to adults
- Displays regressive behaviors (acting like a much younger child)
- Repetitively reenacts the event in play activities.
- Appears not to be affected
- Thinks about it privately
- Asks a lot of questions
- Appears frightened
- Appears agitated and angry
- Appears sad and withdrawn
- Displays difficulty sleeping
- Stomach aches and somatic complaints

It is very important that you take the time to listen to your children. If they seem to need to talk, answer their questions simply, honestly and possibly over and over again. Below are some suggestions that parents may find useful in helping your child deal with the present events:

- Assure fearful children that you will be there to take care of them. Reassure them many times.
- Provide physical closeness. Spend extra time putting your child to bed. Talk and offer reassurance.
- Encourage children to ask questions and to discuss, write or draw their feelings.
- Be a good listener. Listen carefully for any misconceptions or distortions the student may have regarding what happened.
- Talk with your child and provide simple, accurate information to questions.
- Provide play and fun experiences to relieve tension.
- Help the child develop safety plans and procedures (“What should you do if…..?”)
- Remind them of concrete examples of where they are being protected and cared for by parents, adults, teachers, police, etc.
- Make sure the child gets rest and exercise.

Sincerely,

Principal
DEBRIEFING THE CRISIS TEAM

Debriefing Procedures After a Response

Crisis Team Debriefing Checklist
CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS: DEBRIEFING PROCEDURES AFTER A RESPONSE

Purpose of Crisis Debriefing:
- Help Crisis Team Members understand their feelings are normal.
- Generate support from other team members.
- Give team members guidelines to help themselves.

Structure of Crisis Debriefing:
- **Introduction**: Introduce the idea of the debriefing process. Ground rules are set.
  > Speak for yourself only
  > There is no rank in these sessions
  > No outsiders allowed
  > Not a time to investigate or critique
  > Ask questions anytime
  > Stay for the entire session
  > We do not force others to talk
- **Fact Phase**: Team members are encouraged to tell their stories of the crisis event. "What happened to you just before, during, and right after the crisis?"
- **Thought Phase**: Team members share their first thoughts upon exposure to the worst part of the crisis. "What was it like here before the incident occurred? Where did you spend most of your time? Where did you feel safe?"
- **Reaction Phase**: Feelings and emotional reactions are stated. "What emotions did you experience at the incident?"
- **Symptom Phase**: The team discusses what has changed in their lives since responding to the crisis (physical, emotional, behavioral) "What have you done since the crisis?"
- **Teaching Phase**: The Crisis Debriefing Leader provides reassurance that what individuals or the group is experiencing is a normal reaction to a tragedy.
  - Normal Emotions of Grief
  - Psychological Reactions to Trauma
  - The Five Ways to Manage Life
    > Face truth and reality of any situation
    > Feel emotions that go with that situation
    > Adjust to environments
    > Invest in others
    > Remember as accurately as possible.
- **Re-Entry Phase**: Team members can ask questions and summary statements are made. Team members to make a plan to take care of themselves.
AEA CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM CHECKLIST

Name: __________________________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________________
Team: __________________________________________________________________
Response: ____________________________________________________________________

DEBRIEF

☐ Set up the time, date and location of the debriefing and invite all team participants
☐ Names of Crisis Response Team members in attendance

☐ Facilitate the "Grief Recovery Process" for the members
☐ Discuss successes and problems
☐ Discuss suggested changes and recommendations

NOTES:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

TURN THIS COMPLETED FORM IN TO THE CRISIS TEAM LEADER
GRIEF INFORMATION

Stages of Grief
Developmental Stages of Understanding Death and Grieving
Children’s Grief
The Grieving Child’s Bill of Rights
How to Comfort Those Who Grieve
Grief Processing Support Group
How to Comfort Adults Who Grieve
Normal Grief Reactions
How Families Can Help Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety
Age-Specific Interventions at Home for Children in Trauma
How to Deal with Grief
Long Term Impact of a Traumatic Event
STAGES OF GRIEF

Following a death, those left behind grieve in a variety of ways. Although grief is usually described in a series of stages, not everyone touched by the death goes through the stages of grief in the order listed below, and not every person goes through every stage. In addition, some people may return to stages an observer may think that person has already passed through earlier.

1. DENIAL:
   “No, it can’t be! Not him/her!” This may be mixed with shock or disbelief that the event has actually occurred. Students may spend time confirming the facts with fellow students, hoping to discover that there has been some mistake in the reporting.

2. ANGER:
   “Why him/her? Why not someone else? Someone else is always doing bad things. Why not someone else?” As the reality of the loss sinks in, there may be blaming of other people for the event having happened. Or there may be anger at unrelated people and events, a need to rant and rave and be critical.

3. DEPRESSION:
   “It’s so hard, everything is so hard and nothing seems important anymore.” Often depression sets in as anger begins to lessen. Depression is normal during a period of loss. The person generally lacks energy and retreats from activities and people. Although survivors have other people for support, they may still feel very much alone and sad.

4. BARGAINING:
   “Dear God, if you bring him/her back again, I promise I’ll be good and never get mad at him/her again.” This may be associated with feelings of guilt, where a student wishes to undo earlier interactions with the one who has died, or even make promises that if this event can be undone, the survivor will be a better, different person.

5. ACCEPTANCE:
   “Well, I don’t like what’s happened, (sigh) but I can’t change anything about it now.” This is the culmination of successful grieving when survivors come to grips with the reality of the death.

6. LIFE AFTER:
   Individual and families probably won’t end up at the same place they started before the loss or crisis began. If the loss was severe such as suicide of a close friend or family member, the person or family may function at a lower level for the rest of their lives. However, if people can accept their feelings, talk them out, and accept help from others, they may have a new sense of self-esteem, security, and empowerment, knowing they can meet challenges and problems in the future.
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF UNDERSTANDING DEATH AND GRIEVING

Infancy:
When a member of the family dies, an infant may receive less physical/loving care as a result of the caregiver’s grieving. The infant may react to this situation in a physical manner with an increase in crying and not being able to be easily soothed, developing slight skin rashes, or clinging to caregivers. Generally, these behaviors are temporary and will diminish as caregivers are again able to focus normal attention to the infant.

Grieving caregivers can be advised to:

• Spend some time each day in a nurturing, soothing manner with the infant.
• Keep the infant’s routine as consistent as possible.
• Let other nurturing family members help with care giving.
• Allow others to help with household tasks.

Preschool Age:
Preschoolers do not understand that death is permanent and view it as reversible and temporary. Death may be confused with sleeping or the person merely being absent, with the belief the person will return. Since children are egocentric, death may be perceived as punishment for wrongdoing or caused because the child has previously wished the person dead. Sometimes, death is thought of as violent. Children also sometimes think they might catch the condition which caused the death. Some children think dead people live underground.

Preschoolers may exhibit these possible behaviors upon the death of a parent, peer, or other love one:

• May show little concern at times.
• Bedwetting, thumb sucking, baby talk, fear of the dark.
• Fear of separating from significant others.
• May need to talk about death a lot. These repetitions make it real for the child and he/she may say things, such as, “Ben can’t use his dump truck anymore cause he’s dead.”

Adults can do the following to help a child cope with death:

• Tell them what to expect regarding the funeral, parents/family grieving.
• Explain to them how things might look and what might happen.
• Encourage all adults in the school to use terms “dead/death” and not phrases of “passed away,” “sleeping,” “resting,” or “taken from us.” Children think in literal terms and may fear going to sleep themselves.
• Reassure the child regarding routines, activities, and schedules.
• Keep explanations short, simple, and truthful. Explanations may need to be frequently repeated.

School Age:
From five to nine years of age, the child begins to perceive death as possible for others but not for him/her.

Between nine and eleven years, the child will perceive death as including them. Death is becoming more real, final, universal, and inevitable. The child may show interest in biological aspects of death and want to know details of the funeral.

continued
Adolescents will frequently have encountered several situations of loss in addition to death. These losses may include separation from friends, relatives, or acquaintances, and may trigger feelings of unresolved grief. Adolescents frequently respond to death very intensely. Developmentally, the adolescent is searching for explanations regarding all aspects of life which includes death.

**Adolescents may view death and its affect in the following ways:**

- peaceful sleep that will make everything better
- punishing someone
- making someone express love for them
- satisfaction from fantasies about death
- death being glamorized
- reunited with someone who died
- escape from feelings of hopelessness/helplessness

**School-age children and adolescents may show these behaviors:**

- crying and/or sobbing
- anxiety
- headaches
- abdominal pain
- denial of death
- hostile reaction toward deceased
- guilt
- poor grades
- lack of attention
- loss of manual skills
- fear of continuing friendship bonds: might lose another friend

**Adults can help school-age children and adolescents by:**

- Providing information for the questions asked.
- Physically and verbally comforting students—acknowledgement of their pain.
- Flexing the student’s schedule as needed.
- Referral to appropriate counseling resources.
- Admitting that adults do not always know why certain events happen.

“Memory is the lasting link that can help children and adults accept a death.”
CHILDRENS’ GRIEF

Grief is the constellation of thoughts and feelings the child experiences following the death. For children to heal, they must be taught and encouraged to mourn and to express their grief outside themselves.

Children often ask the “why?” question. They don’t need a pat answer; what they need is a safe place to talk, think, and play out their feelings about this question.

Boys often have more difficulty in allowing themselves to feel helpless and express their grief. Girls sometimes repress appropriate grief-borne anger.

Caring adults will generally find their efforts well received if they make themselves available to young children. Adolescents often find it hard to accept help. Their primary developmental task – to separate from their parents and other adult caregivers - runs contrary to seeking help from these same people.

Six Reconciliation Needs of Mourning

Need 1. Acknowledge the Reality of Death.
Children must be provided with an honest and open explanation (at their developmental level of understanding) about the nature and cause of the death. News of a death is best conveyed from someone who has a preexisting, stabilizing relationship with the child. The ability to acknowledge the reality of the death often comes only after the child is provided with opportunities to talk out, play out, or even act out the circumstances of the death.

Need 2. Move Toward the Pain of the Loss While Being Nurtured.
To heal, the bereaved child should be encouraged to embrace the wide range of thoughts and feelings that result from the death. The art of helping children with this need is to allow them to teach you how they feel. Sometimes what they need from adults is an awareness that it is ok to talk about and play out their many thoughts and feelings. Children mourn intermittently; we should acknowledge this wave-like quality in their capacity to mourn.

Need 3. Convert the Relationship from one of Presence to One of Memory.
This need involves allowing and encouraging children to move from the “here and now” of their relationship to the “what was”. The relationship must be altered from one of presence to one of memory. This process often begins with the funeral. One of the best ways to embrace memories is through the creation of a “Memory Book”. Remembering makes hope possible.

Need 4. Develop a New Self-Identity.
Personal identity or self-perception comes form the ongoing process of establishing a sense of who one is. The death of someone loved can, and often does, permanently change the child’s self-perception. As children work on this central need of mourning, the child often finds themselves thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that seem totally foreign. This is an inherent part of the search for a new identity in the absence of the person who died. While everyone in the family will have new roles and responsibilities when a death occurs, we should never assign inappropriate role responsibilities to children (i.e., “Now you are the man of the house.” This puts an impossible burden on a child. The identity of bereaved children is also impacted in that they become aware that they and others around them are mortal.

Need 5. Search for Meaning in the Loss.
This involves allowing the child to search for and restore a sense of meaning in life after the death. “How?” and “Why?” questions. Many adults make the mistake of thinking they must always have answers to the bereaved child’s questions. Adults need to know they do not have all the answers. Suffering is inherent to the child’s work on this reconciliation need. This is a painful yet natural part of the work of mourning. We have to remind ourselves of the collective wisdom of the ages that says people reflect on the true meaning of life when they experience loss.

continued
Need 6. Experience Long-Term Support.
Grief is a process, not an event. Children who actively participate in the work of mourning will need stabilizing adults in their lives long after the event of the death. Grief is not an enemy to overcome, but a necessary consequence of having loved. Children’s “griefbursts” – heightened periods of loss and sadness – demand understanding, not judgment. Griefbursts may occur during pivotal life moments (birthdays, holidays, vacations, graduation, getting married, having children, etc).

Nine Common Myths of Childhood Grief

Myth 1: Grief and mourning are the same experience.
Grief represents the thoughts and feelings that are experienced within children when someone they loved dies (internal). Mourning means taking the internal experiences of grief and expressing it outside oneself (external). Because bereaved children mourn more through their behaviors than they do with words, mourning for them is typically not expressed in the same ways it is for adults.

Myth 2: Children only grieve for a short time.
Bereaved children do not heal quickly; it can often take years.

Myth 3: A child’s grief proceeds in predictable, orderly stages.
People use the “stages of grief” to try and make sense of an experience that is not as orderly and predictable as we would like it to be.

Myth 4. Caregivers do not have to mourn for their children to mourn.
Parents and other significant adults in a child’s life have the biggest influence on the child’s own grief experiences. The problem comes when parents, however loving and well-intentioned, try to conceal their own grief and mourning from their children in an attempt to protect them from more pain. This is a mistake, as appropriate modeling is a primary way that children learn.

Myth 5: Bereaved children grow to be maladjusted adults.
Bereaved children can heal and grow with early intervention and compassionate care.

Myth 6: Children are better off if they do not attend funerals.
The funeral provides a structure that allows and encourages both adults and children to comfort each other, openly mourn, and honor the life of the person who has died. Children should be encouraged to attend, but never forced.

Myth 7: Children who cry too much are being weak and are harming themselves.
When bereaved children cry, they are indicating their willingness to do the work of mourning.

Myth 8: Children are too young to understand death.
Teaching abstract concepts about death and religion is no easy task, but it is one we must take seriously as we try to help bereaved children. Bereaved children need age-appropriate care.

Myth 9: We should help children “get over” their grief.
Healthy mourning takes a long time. Like adults, children do not get over grief; they learn to live with it.

THE GRIEVING CHILD’S BILL OF RIGHTS

Someone you loved has died. You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Together those thoughts and feelings are called grief, which is a normal (though really difficult) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died.

The following 10 rights will help you understand your grief and eventually feel better about life again. Use the ideas that make sense to you. Post this list on your refrigerator or on your bedroom door or wall. Re-reading it often will help you stay on track as you move toward healing from your loss. You might also ask the grown-ups in your life to read this list so they will remember to help you in the best way they can.

1. I have the right to have my own unique feelings about the death. I may feel mad, sad, or lonely. I may feel scared or relieved. I may feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.

2. I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking. When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don’t want to talk about it, that’s OK, too.

3. I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way. When they are hurting, some kids like to play so they’ll feel better for a while. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and scream. This does not mean I am bad, it just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.

4. I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me. Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.

5. I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems. I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.

6. I have the right to have “griefbursts”. Griefbursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes—even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.

7. I have the right to use my beliefs about my god to help me deal with my feelings of grief. Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

8. I have the right to try and figure out why the person I loved died. But it’s OK if I don’t find an answer. “Why” questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.

9. I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died. Sometimes those memories will be happy and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, these memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.

10. I have the right to move toward and feel my grief and, over time, to heal. I’ll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I’ll always miss him or her.

HOW TO COMFORT THOSE WHO GRIEVE

1. Be a Good Listener.
2. Spend time away from the group and encourage the student to talk about their feelings.
3. Be sure to have good eye contact and use simple, direct words. Let them be mad or express other feelings.
4. Let the student know that you care and are concerned about what they say, think, or feel.
5. Give information about what’s going to happen. Be as predictable as possible and keep any promises made.
6. Children generally model their responses to death according to the reactions of adults in their family.

Ways to Help
Parents and teachers can help by encouraging children to ask for help without feeling guilty. Provide an environment in which the teenager can talk about anxieties and worries. Take their problems seriously and refrain from giving easy answers to what can be very complex problems.

Rather than offer advice, teens will consider it more helpful if the listener asks questions that express concern and show a willingness to listen. Questions can help teens identify their emotions and help them see what they can do to improve the situation. Some of the following questions may lead a distressed young person to a greater awareness of the situation.

Ask questions in a warm, caring, and supporting way.

- What are you afraid of?
- How much change is going on in your life?
- What can you control or avoid when dealing with a difficult problem?
- Do you feel you are falling short of some ideal?
- Have you given up on a situation?
- What role do you have in shaping your feelings and reactions?

Get involved, trust your instincts. Ask a person directly if they are considering self-destructive behavior. Don’t avoid the topic or wait for the person to ask for help, a person in need will feel you care. Be alert to a child’s feelings. Teen problems are perceived to be more devastating to the young persons: failing to achieve a goal, feeling unattractive, feeling unloved, fearing competition and failure, feeling guilty for the problems of others, breaking up a meaningful relationship. Be a resource so if a friend is so depressed that the help of a professional is needed you can find help and encourage the person to seek counseling.

Discuss appropriate ways to deal with stress and depression. Provide opportunities for group support, to enable teens to share their problems. Encourage: physical activities, listening to music, going out with friends. “A joy shared is doubled, a sorrow shared is halved.”
GRIEF PROCESSING SUPPORT GROUP

Some Ideas/Suggestions

1. “Drop-in Center” all day the first day that news of a death is disseminated.

2. More than one counselor/facilitator is needed in each support group; it is also a good idea to have others available for relief purposes.

   Co-facilitating is especially critical to maintain continuity; for the purpose of identifying high risk students and for general support and help.

3. Focus:
   a. Memories, positive experiences with a person who died.
   b. Feelings about the loss.
   c. Stages of grieving (grief education)—students may bring up spirituality.
   d. Funeral and services—for appropriate ages.
   e. Future—what next?
   f. Guilt work if needed (some need to focus on causation).
   g. Family and friend’s response (kids often wonder “What can I do? How can I help?”).
   h. Identifying others that the students are concerned about (provides them with an opportunity to help, gives them a purpose in a crisis, allows them to be part of a larger supportive community response).

4. Avoid focusing on:
   a. Suicidal—thoughts, feelings, experiences.
   b. Constant talk about the actual death (morbid focusing).
   c. Blame—this causes pain to those who may already be suffering a tremendous amount of guilt. The blame may also be inaccurate.
   d. Rumors. Emphasize that not everything they hear is true.

5. If the death is a suicide:
   a. Stress the fact that suicide is the result of a troubled personality.
   b. Reduce identification with the actions of the deceased—it was their action, not someone else’s fault.
   c. De-emphasize suicide—emphasize what people can do to help each other and themselves.
   d. Deal with their stressors and concerns—find out what they are and talk about them.
   e. Limit memorialization—don’t glorify the death or prolong praises and tributes.

6. May need to reconvene after funeral for an hour to refocus on grief/loss—bring group to closure and offer various resources for ongoing support.

7. Remember throughout the course of the group process, facilitators need to identify students with problems around the issue of suicide/self-destructive behavior (regardless of the cause of the death) and to assess whether or not these youngsters could benefit from additional assistance.

8. The counseling staff may want to consider the possibility of a “neighborhood group” in the evening to reach youngsters at all age levels (check in with parent[s] to see if there is a need).

9. Finally, viewing group work as a possibility for the whole system, K-12; death impacts the whole educational community, not just one facility.
HOW TO COMFORT ADULTS WHO GRIEVE

1. Be There:
Attend the funeral, visit, call, and spend time with those grieving. Particularly after the initial attention subsides. Bring food, do errands. Don’t ask what you can do. Instead, give them specific options—I can mow your lawn, bring over paper goods to use with your visitors, etc.

2. Listen:
Grieving people need to talk about this sudden vacuum in their lives. Allow them to know that you wish to hear about their experiences. “I’d like to be here with you for a while if you’d like to talk.” “It’s hard to believe that he’s gone, isn’t it?”

3. Send a note:
Notes can share personal memories, short, and simple. “I’m thinking of you during these painful days.” “I am praying for you during this time.”

4. Give a gift:
A collection of poems. A book to the library in memory of the deceased. A donation to a related charity.

5. Extend an invitation:
Consider what the person likes to do. Eat out? Go to a play? Take a drive? Bereaved people often decline invitations or cancel at the last minute. Don’t give up. Ask again. Don’t forget the person after time has passed.
NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

A person may experience some of the following responses when someone they love dies. They are all natural and normal reactions to the loss of a loved one.

YOU MAY:

— Find it difficult to sleep at night; frequent dreams of your loved one.
— Feel an emptiness in your stomach and lose your appetite.
— Have difficulty concentrating on a task or completing an activity.
— Feel restless, wander aimlessly, or find yourself becoming forgetful.
— Sense the loved one’s presence (expecting them to walk in the door at the usual time, hearing their voice, seeing their face).
— Feel as though the loss isn’t real—it didn’t really happen.
— Assume mannerisms or traits of your loved one.
— Experience an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
— Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn’t happen in your relationship with the deceased.
— Feel very angry at your loved one for leaving you.
— Cry at unexpected times.
— Feel your mood change abruptly.
— Feel an urge to tell and retell and remember things about your loved one and the experience of their death.
— Feel a need to take care of the people around you who appear uncomfortable by politely not talking about your feelings of loss.
— Have a "griefburst" when you hear a familiar song, drive by a place you used to go with the person who died, etc.

THESE GRIEF RESPONSES ARE NATURAL AND NORMAL.
HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH FEAR AND ANXIETY

Whether tragic events touch your family personally or are brought into your home via newspapers and television, you can help children cope with the anxiety that violence, death, and disasters can cause.

Listening and talking to children about their concerns can reassure them that they will be safe. Start by encouraging them to discuss how they have been affected by what is happening around them. Even young children may have specific questions about tragedies. Children react to stress at their own developmental level.

The *Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign* offers these pointers for parents and other caregivers:

- **Encourage children to ask questions.**
  Listen to what they say. Provide comfort and assurance that address their specific fears. It's okay to admit you can't answer all of their questions.

- **Talk on their level.**
  Communicate with your children in a way they can understand. Don’t get too technical or complicated.

- **Find out what frightens them.**
  Encourage your children to talk about fears they may have. They may worry that someone will harm them at school or that someone will try to hurt you.

- **Focus on the positive.**
  Reinforce the fact that most people are kind and caring. Remind your child of the heroic actions taken by ordinary people to help victims of tragedy.

- **Pay attention.**
  Your children’s play and drawings may give you a glimpse into their questions or concerns. Ask them to tell you what is going on in the game or the picture. It’s an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions, answer questions, and give reassurance.

- **Develop a plan.**
  Establish a family emergency plan for the future, such as a meeting place where everyone should gather if something unexpected happens in your family or neighborhood. It can help you and your children feel safer.

If you are concerned about your child’s reaction to stress or trauma, call your physician or a community mental health center.

National Mental Health Information Center. Article location: http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp
Children are just as affected as adults are by a disaster or traumatic event. Some may be affected even more, but no one realizes it. Without intending to, we, as parents, may send our children a message that it is not all right to talk about the experience. This may cause confusion, self-doubt, and feelings of helplessness for a child. Children need to hear that it is normal to feel frightened during and after a disaster or traumatic event. When you acknowledge and normalize these feelings for your children, it will help them make peace with their experience and move on.

Following exposure to a disaster or traumatic event, children are likely to show signs of stress. Signs include sadness and anxiety, outbursts and tantrums, aggressive behavior, a return to earlier behavior that was outgrown, stomach-aches and headaches, and an ongoing desire to stay home from school or away from friends. These reactions are normal and usually do not last long. Whether your child is a preschooler, adolescent, or somewhere in between, you can help your child by following the suggestions below:

**Preschooler**
- Stick to regular family routines.
- Make an extra effort to provide comfort and reassurance.
- Avoid unnecessary separations.
- Permit a child to sleep in the parents’ room temporarily.
- Encourage expression of feelings and emotions through play, drawing, puppet shows, and story telling.
- Limit media exposure.
- Develop a safety plan for future incidents.

**Elementary Age Children**
- Provide extra attention and consideration.
- Set gentle but firm limits for acting out behavior.
- Listen to a child’s repeated telling of his/her trauma experience.
- Encourage expression of thoughts and feelings through conversation and play.
- Provide home chores and rehabilitation activities that are structured, but not too demanding.
- Rehearse safety measures for future incidents.
- Point out kind deeds and the ways in which people helped each other during the disaster or traumatic event.

**Pre-adolescents and Adolescents**
- Provide extra attention and consideration.
- Be there to listen to your children, but don’t force them to talk about feelings and emotions.
- Encourage discussion of trauma experiences among peers.
- Promote involvement with community recovery work.
- Urge participation in physical activities.
- Encourage resumption of regular social and recreational activities.
- Rehearse family safety measures for future incidents.

It is important to remember that you do not have to “fix” how your child feels. Instead, focus on helping your child understand and deal with his or her experiences. Healing is an evolving state for most children, but some may need professional help.

If signs of stress do not subside after a few weeks, or if they get worse, consider consulting a mental health professional who has special training in working with children. In time and with help, your children will learn that life does go on.
HOW TO DEAL WITH GRIEF

What is grief?
Grief is the normal response of sorrow, emotion, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from family and friends, or loss of good health due to illness.

How does grief feel?
Just after a death or loss, you may feel empty and numb, as if you are in shock. You may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth, or trouble sleeping and eating. You may become angry - at a situation, a particular person, or just angry in general. Almost everyone in grief also experiences guilt. Guilt is often expressed as “I could have, I should have, and I wish I would have” statements. People in grief may have strange dreams or nightmares, be absent-minded, withdraw socially, or lack the desire to return to work. While these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief, they will pass.

How long does grief last?
Grief lasts as long as it takes you to accept and learn to live with your loss. For some people, grief lasts a few months. For others, grieving may take years. The length of time spent grieving is different for each person. There are many reasons for the differences, including personality, health, coping style, culture, family background, and life experiences. The time spent grieving also depends on your relationship with the person lost and how prepared you were for the loss.

How will I know when I’m done grieving?
Every person who experiences a death or other loss must complete a four-step grieving process:
1. Accept the loss;
2. Work through and feel the physical and emotional pain of grief;
3. Adjust to living in a world without the person or item lost; and
4. Move on with life.

The grieving process is over only when a person completes the four steps.

How does grief differ from depression?
Depression is more than a feeling of grief after losing someone or something you love. Clinical depression is a whole body disorder. It can take over the way you think and feel. Symptoms of depression include:
• A sad, anxious, or “empty” mood that won’t go away;
• Loss of interest in what you used to enjoy;
• Low energy, fatigue, feeling “slowed down;”
• Changes in sleep patterns;
• Loss of appetite, weight loss, or weight gain;
• Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions;
• Feeling hopeless or gloomy;
• Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless;
• Thoughts of death or suicide or a suicide attempt; and
• Recurring aches and pains that don’t respond to treatment.

If you recently experienced a death or other loss, these feelings may be part of a normal grief reaction. But if these feelings persist with no lifting mood, ask for help.

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF A TRAUMATIC EVENT: WHAT TO EXPECT IN YOUR PERSONAL, FAMILY, WORK, AND FINANCIAL LIFE

The impact of a disaster or traumatic event goes far beyond the immediate devastation caused by the initial destruction. Just as it takes time to reconstruct damaged buildings, it takes time to grieve and rebuild our lives. Life may not return to normal for months, or even years, following a disaster or traumatic event. There may be changes in living conditions that cause changes in day-to-day activities, leading to strains in relationships, changes in expectations, and shifts in responsibilities. These disruptions in relationships, roles, and routines can make life unfamiliar or unpredictable.

A disaster or traumatic event can have far-reaching effects in several major areas of our lives, making rebuilding our emotional lives extremely difficult. However, sometimes just knowing what to expect can help ease the transition back to a normal life. As you and your family begin to rebuild your lives, you may face any or all of the situations described below:

Personal Uncertainties

- Feeling mentally drained and physically exhausted is normal and common.
- The loss of a home, business, or income may result in a loss of self-esteem.
- Unresolved emotional issues or pre-existing problems and previous losses may resurface.
- Anniversaries of the disaster or traumatic event remind us of our losses. This reaction may be triggered by the event date each month and may be especially strong on the 1-year anniversary.

Family Relationship Changes

- Relationships may become stressed when everyone’s emotions are closer to the surface, and conflicts with spouses and other family members may increase.
- When homes are destroyed or damaged, families may have to live in temporary housing or with relatives and friends, leading to overcrowding and added tension.
- Family members or friends may be forced to move out of the area, disrupting relationships and usual support systems.
- Parents may be physically or emotionally unavailable to their children following a disaster or traumatic event, because they are busy cleaning up or are preoccupied, distracted, or distressed by difficulties related to the event.
- Parents may become overprotective of their children and their children’s safety.
- Children may be expected to take on more adult roles, such as watching siblings or helping with cleanup efforts, leaving less time to spend with friends or participate in routine activities, such as summer camp or field trips.

Work Disruptions

- Fatigue and increased stress from preoccupation with personal issues can lead to poor work performance.
- Conflicts with co-workers may increase, due to the added stress.
- Businesses may be forced to lay off employees, or company work hours and wages may be cut.
- Reduced income may require taking a second job.
- Daily travel and commute patterns are disrupted, due to the loss of a car or road reconstruction.

continued
Financial Worries

• Those who experience work disruptions may be unable to regain their previous standard of living, leading to financial concerns and unpaid bills.

• Seeking financial assistance to rebuild and repair damages adds to the already high levels of stress caused by the disaster or traumatic event, and the hassles of dealing with bureaucracy can add to the frustration.

How to Be a Survivor

Regardless of individual circumstances, everyone needs to complete several steps on the road to recovery from disaster or traumatic event:

• Accept the reality of the loss.

• Allow yourself and other family members to feel sadness and grief over what has happened.

• Adjust to a new environment. Acknowledge that the person or possessions lost are gone forever.

• Put closure to the situation and move on. Do not continue to let the loss take its physical, emotional, or spiritual toll.

• Have faith in better times to come.

You and your family have survived a traumatic event. That doesn’t mean your lives are over or that you don’t deserve to be happy again. Return to doing things you enjoy with friends and as a family. Reestablish the routines of your life. Make commitments and keep them.

If you or a member of your family still have trouble coping on your own, ask for help. Consult a counselor or mental health professional. In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from your human resources department or your company’s Employee Assistance Program. For help with financial matters, contact a financial advisor.

National Mental Health Information Center. Article location: http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/NMH02-0139/default.asp
NMH02-0139 10/02
RESPONSE ROOM OR GRIEF SUPPORT
GROUP ACTIVITIES

Introduce: Cognitive
Report: Cognitive
Reflect: Transition
Feel: Emotional
Restore: Transition
Learn: Cognitive
Resume: Cognitive
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Introduce
  Who are you?
  Why are we here?

Report
  What happened?
  How did you hear about it?

Reflect
  What do you think?
  What was the worst part?

Feel
  What did you feel when you first heard about it?
  What are you feeling now?

Restore
  How can we gain from this experience?
  What gives you the strength to keep going?

Learn
  What can we learn?
  What can you do to help you get through this?

Resume
  Where do we go from here?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS


t

Introduce
Cognitive

Key Words
Introduction
Expectations
Participation

Intent
Reduce anxiety in students and increase their participation.

Benefit
Establish rules of group so students will feel safe to explore feelings. Give each student an opportunity to speak on safe topics to increase participation.

Guidelines
Set the foundation for the session. It is important to address concerns and reduce anxiety about the group process.
Give each participant an opportunity to introduce self before going into the details of the tragedy.
Keep it voluntary. Do not force anybody to talk.

Include
Who you are.
Why you are here.
Have the group introduce themselves.
How long they will be here.
Make it a safe place.

Sample Statements
I’m a counselor/psychologist/consultant with the AEA. I’m also part of the school’s support team and I’m here to talk with you about what’s going on with one of the other students.
I don’t know most of you so let’s go around the circle and give each of you and opportunity to tell us your name.
We’re going to be talking for a while and when we’re done, you’ll return to your regular classroom activities.
We’re going to be talking about some important thoughts and feelings. I would like this to be a safe place for you to talk. So we need to treat each other with kindness and respect.
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Report
Cognitive

Key Words
Describe event
Report facts
Clarify facts
Control rumors

Intent
To clarify and report the facts of the tragedy and dispel any rumors.

Benefit
To have each participant describe their experience from a cognitive, and thereby safe, perspective.

Guidelines
Get them talking but keep them focused.
Keep this as non-emotional as possible.
Address the rumors that are flying around. Clarify facts as you know them.

Sample Questions
How did you first hear about what happened?
Where were you when you first heard about it?
When did you find out? What did you hear?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Reflect
Transition

Key Words
Examine
Ponder
Consider
Personal Reactions

Intent
To seek cognitive responses to the tragedy, but on a more personal level.

Benefit
Continue the discussion on a safe level of revealing while moving towards more emotional disclosure.

Guidelines
Keep them focused on their personal reactions without getting too emotional.
If you move too quickly into the emotions, it may scare some of the students and inhibit their involvement.
Keep the participation voluntary. Don't require students to speak unless they wish to do so.

Sample Questions
What did you think when you heard about this?
What is the worst thing about this?
What one thing stands out the most for you?
What hit the hardest?
If you could erase one thing, what would it be?
What is your greatest concern right now?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Feel
Emotional

Key Words
Identify
Express
Affirm
Validate

Intent
To solicit emotional reactions and consequences.

Benefit
An opportunity to share feelings and have them validated and normalized.

Guidelines
Group leader needs to be an effective listener. Do very little talking.
May need to model your emotions or give them some choices to get them to open up.
Watch for student who are shutting down or making statements that indicate they may need follow-up services.
Keep the group a safe place for revealing. Ensure everyone is treated with respect.

Sample Questions
How did you feel when you heard about it?
What are you feeling now?
Can you locate that feeling in your body?
How would you name your feeling?
What feelings come to mind when you talk about his death?
When I first heard about it, I felt mad. It seemed so unfair. What did you feel when you first heard about it?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Restore
Transition

**Key Words**
Reframe
Motivate
Encourage
Growth

**Intent**
To transition from emotional level back to cognitive with a positive focus on outcome.

**Benefit**
Increase awareness that each person has the ability to cope with tragedy and recover from pain.
Meaningful movement from the emotional to the cognitive level so students will be able to return to the classroom environment and function.

**Guidelines**
Listen to fears/concerns and try to reframe them into something positive or workable.
Be sure to give them some confidence in their coping strategies. Instill hope.
If appropriate, help them identify something positive they can do to help a returning student who was severely impacted by the tragedy.

**Sample Questions**
What is something positive you can take away from this experience?
Was there anytime during this experience you saw some inner strength coming through?
What gives you the strength right now to keep going?
What have you noticed that tells you things are getting a little better?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Learn
Cognitive

**Key Words**
Grieve
Cope
Integrate
Survive

**Intent**
To educate as to normal reactions, teach healthy coping responses, and address any other relevant topics.

**Benefit**
Teach important life-skills while increasing student's support network. Enable them to return to routine of classroom activities.

**Guidelines**
Take advantage of the “teachable moment.” Discuss relevant topics such as safety issues, stress management, healthy grieving, appropriate support resources, peer assistance, suitable adult communication.

Get a commitment from each student to discuss this tragedy with a responsible adult. Help them identify who that might be for them.

Spot any unhealthy responses for possible parent contact and referral.

**Sample Questions**
Who could you talk to about this when you go home tonight?
What are some things you can do for yourself to help you get through this?
Has anyone close to you ever died before? What did you do then to get through it? What could you do now?
Are there times when things aren’t quite so bad? Describe that to me.
What will you start noticing about yourself that will tell you you’re healing from this? What will others notice?
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE
GRIEF RECOVERY PROCESS

Resume
Cognitive

Key Words
Respond
Assess
Follow-up
Return

Intent
Summarize the experience and bring closure with an emphasis on positive learning aspects.

Benefit
Another opportunity for students to ask questions or address any concerns they may have.
Give the students closure from this experience and return them to a cognitive level so they can return to the classroom and be able to function.

Guidelines
Make sure all students are emotionally ready to return to their daily routine. Stay with any who are not or refer them to appropriate people.
Note any students who have exhibited “red flags” or are withdrawn. Get their name for further follow-up by yourself or other appropriate resources.
Involve and inform the teacher(s) and counseling staff.
ON-LINE RESOURCES

http://griefnet.org
Internet community of persons dealing with grief, death, and major loss.

http://kidsaid.com
A safe place for kids to help each other deal with grief and loss. Parents and kids can ask questions and find answers.

http://www.griefwatch.com
Excellent grief newsletter. Publisher of the book, Tear Soup

http://www.thecarecommunity.com
Good blogs for people in all states of grief.

http://www.griefshare.org
Find local support groups, sign up for daily inspirational e-mails, on line resources

http://www.griefhealing.com
On line grief discussion groups. Monitored by Hospice.

http://www.grieflossrecovery.com
Poems, articles, and memoirs about grief

http://centering.org
Excellent source for inexpensive books on all types of grief and loss.

http://www.compassionatefriends.org
Grief support after the death of a child. Online chat rooms for the support for parents, grandparents, and siblings over the age of 18.

AEA MEDIA RESOURCES

Growing Through Loss – a program to be used for a grief support group
School Crisis Prevention and Intervention – The Prepare Model
Crisis Prevention & Response: a Collection of NASP Resources
## AEA MEDIA CATALOG SEARCH: GRIEF

17 item(s) were found (hint: search may be revised at bottom of page or do subject search on: grief):

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<td>P.S. I Miss You: The Aftermath of Suicide</td>
<td>(004116)</td>
<td>H A</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>22 min.</td>
<td>DV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenage Grief</td>
<td>(043892)</td>
<td>M H</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13 min.</td>
<td>DV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasure Chest of Group Activities NEWEST</td>
<td>(154040)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>PB</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Video Essay on Teenage Grief NEWER</td>
<td>(046363)</td>
<td>H A</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>47 min.</td>
<td>DV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?</td>
<td>(821186)</td>
<td>P I</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>80 min.</td>
<td>DV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** GRADE LEVEL KEY:
Y = Preschool  I = Intermediate (4-5)  H = High School (9-12)
P = Primary (K-3)  M = Middle (6-8)  A = Adult

* FORMAT KEY:
VT = Video Tape  PB = Professional Book  DV = Disc
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