



CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN:

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE

What is a Crisis?

An event of limited duration that is typically unpredicted and overwhelming for those involved. A crisis state may result upon exposure to drastic and tragic changes in an individual's environment. With successful intervention, the equilibrium can be restored between the environment and the individual's perception of his/her world as a safe and secure place.

Examples of Crisis Events:

- A natural disaster (e.g., a fire or earthquake)
- A death of a student, staff member or parent, by illness, accident or suicide
- A traumatic event (e.g., violence in the community or an assault or medical emergency at school)
- An accident (e.g., car, bus, or plane crash)
- A prolonged illness or injury of a student or staff member

What is the Purpose of Crisis Response?

- To prevent a chaotic situation from escalating into a potentially catastrophic one
- To help those affected by the crisis to return as quickly as possible to pre-crisis functioning
- To decrease the potential long-term effects of the crisis on functioning
- To provide accurate and relevant information to those impacted by the crisis

CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN: CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Crisis Response Team

Crisis response teams are designated individuals at schools that fulfill vital roles in the event of a crisis. Each team should include the following positions:

- **District Crisis Response Lead – Director of Pupil Services**
This individual coordinates crisis response at the district level. Duties include: communicating with the Crisis Team Leader, determining modes of communication with students, staff, and parents, and contacting a CARE Youth Project Administrator to secure counseling support.

- **Crisis Response Team Leader – School Site Administrator**
This individual provides leadership at a school site during a crisis situation. Duties include: verifying facts, coordinating action taken and services provided, and communicating information to the district office, crisis response team, school staff, and parents.

- **Logistics Coordinator – School Site Administrator**
This individual coordinates crisis team responders and the physical environment. Duties include: reviewing the school schedule, designating activities for the classroom, assigning areas for counseling, scheduling staff and parent meetings.

- **Counseling Team – Social Worker, Counselor, School Psychologist**
The counseling team will provide psychological first-aid to students, staff, and parents. Duties include: assisting in communicating information on the crisis, distributing resources, helping teachers with classroom discussions and activities, creating a referral process for those in need of additional supports, setting up a counseling center, contacting parents of students who received crisis counseling, and providing referrals for follow-up care.

CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN: COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN

Crisis Response

The main priorities for the Crisis Response Team Leader include:

- **Identifying the crisis event and gathering information**
Determine the degree of impact of the crisis event on the school.
- **Communicating immediately with the district office**
Contact the Superintendent's office as well as the Director of Pupil Services to share information on the crisis and to coordinate the response.
- **Convening the Crisis Response Team**
Contact the team by phone or email, and schedule a meeting as soon as possible to discuss roles and responsibilities.
- **Scheduling a staff meeting**
Contact the staff by phone or email, and schedule a meeting as soon as possible to share information on the crisis, outline each staff member's role, explain the role of the crisis response center, distribute resources, and encourage open expression of emotions.
- **Supporting school staff**
Identify staff members that may need immediate support, and assign substitute teachers or support personnel to assist teachers in their classroom. Provide resources to staff that may need counseling support at school or through the Employee Assistance Service for Education (EASE). Assign counseling staff to help teachers as needed with classroom discussions and activities.
- **Setting up the Crisis Response Center**
The Logistics Coordinator and Counseling Team Leader will work together to assemble the Crisis Response Center, and will inform the staff on how students and staff can access the Center. Stock the Center with therapeutic items, such as writing materials, games, arts and crafts, and educational information.
- **Requesting additional support from district office**
Evaluate and report the need for additional resources, and/or counseling support to the District Crisis Response Lead.
- **Communicating with parents**
Confer with the Superintendent's Office, as well as the District Crisis Response Lead regarding appropriate communication with parents or media, including timing and mode of communication.
- **Determining Follow-up**
Schedule a meeting with the Crisis Response Team to review the plan for the following day(s), as well as with staff members to debrief and determine additional needs. Make a plan to check-in with students and staff that were significantly impacted by the crisis. Determine appropriate referrals to additional mental health services.

CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN: COMMUNICATION

Suggested Agenda for Staff Meeting

- **Present information regarding the crisis**
Be concise and include only verified facts and essential details. Be sure that family preferences regarding information sharing are observed.

- **Allow for sharing of emotions**
Be prepared to provide the staff members with time to discuss their feelings and reactions to the event, and/or designate an alternative time, venue, or activity conducive to open expression of emotions, and sharing of stories and memories.

- **Review the plan for the school day**
Stress the importance of maintaining routine, while providing students with the opportunity to talk about what happened in a structured manner.

- **Provide *Guidelines for Classroom Discussion and Activities***
Discuss the plan for sharing information with students, and provide tips on how to talk to students about the crisis, as well as examples of appropriate classroom activities.

- **Inform staff on children's common reaction to crisis**
Let the staff know what to expect developmentally from students after a crisis situation, and how to appropriately respond.

- **Instruct staff on referral process for students**
Inform staff of the indicators that a student may be in need of additional support. Review the method of referral, and the location of the Crisis Response Center. Talk about concerns and address questions about identified high-risk students.

- **Provide information on self-care for staff**
Provide resources to staff on how to tend to their own needs, as well as how to access counseling support at school or through the Employee Assistance Service for Education (EASE).

SELF-CARE FOR EDUCATORS

It is just as vital to tend to your own personal needs, as you respond to the needs of your students. Please assess for the impact that a traumatic event has had on your own functioning, and take steps to maintain your health and well-being during these stressful times.

- **Acknowledge your feelings**

It is common to have strong reactions to a traumatic event, even if we are not directly impacted. It is normal to feel sadness, anger, anxiety, and fear. Those who have experienced traumas in their past will be more likely to experience a heightened reaction. Acknowledging these feelings will help you to take steps towards healing.

- **Talk with someone about your feelings**

Find a family member, friend, colleague, or a professional, with whom you feel comfortable sharing the emotions you are experiencing following the traumatic event. Talking to someone can provide you with validation and normalization of your feelings, and strategies to assist you in moving forward.

- **Take care of yourself**

Put your own emotional and physical well-being first. Stay active, eat healthy, exercise, rest, relax, mediate, and spend time with loved ones.

- **Connect with your support system**

It is easy to become isolated in your role at a school setting. Seek out the support of your colleagues, and use your existing support networks of family, friends, and/or spiritual or religious outlets. Allow the important people in your life to take care of you.

- **Seek professional help**

Accepting help is a healthy endeavor. If you are experiencing any of the signs listed below for more than a few weeks, seek help from a professional.

Contact the Employee Assistance Service for Education (EASE) at (858) 277-EASE for information on counseling services.

- Increased impatience or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, planning classroom activities or lessons
- Marked changes in eating/sleeping patterns
- Recurring physical ailments
- Reluctance to leave home or attend work
- Feeling numb/ detached
- Feelings of overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Experiencing intrusive thoughts or dreams about the trauma

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

Date: Insert
To: All Staff
From: Administrator
Re: Define Crisis

On (insert date), (name, and brief facts: *Samantha Jones, one of our fifth-grade students, was killed in an automobile accident*). This (loss or tragic event) is expected to have a significant impact on our entire school community. We anticipate a variety of reactions to this (loss or tragic event), from our students, parents, and you as members of our staff. Our crisis team has been mobilized to respond to our school needs.

To effectively assist all members of our school community, an emergency staff meeting will be held at (insert time and location). At that time, our crisis team will provide further details and answer your questions. We will also discuss how to present the information to our students and parents.

If you are asked questions regarding (the death or event) by students prior to the time of our meeting, please avoid discussion of details; tell them that the school staff will be providing information to them as soon as we have it.

If you have any questions or concerns prior to the meeting, please feel free to contact me.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

This information can be given to teachers and other staff to read to students at a designated time to share with the entire student body.

It is with great sadness that I let you know that on (insert day), (name, and brief facts: *Samantha Jones, one of our fifth-grade students, was killed in an automobile accident*).

I know that many of you may be experiencing a variety of emotions right now, and may have a number of questions. I will try to answer any questions that I can. We are going to take the next (designated period of time) to talk about what has happened. At times like this, it is okay to have many different feelings, including sadness, anger, or even confusion. Together, we can talk about whatever you may be feeling or may want to share about what has happened. If I cannot answer your questions, or you would like to talk to someone privately, there is support staff here that you can talk to. Please let me know if you would like to do that.

AGE APPROPRIATE REACTIONS TO CRISIS

Ages 1-5

- Thumb sucking
- Bed wetting
- Changes in appetite
- Difficulties with speech
- Fear of the dark
- Sleep difficulties
- Clinging and whining
- Loss of bladder control
- Separation anxiety
- Fantasizing or dreaming that the event didn't occur, especially through play... a reenactment of the event with a different ending

Ages 5-11

- Excessive crying and sadness
- Avoiding school
- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomachaches)
- Decreases in concentration/ confusion
- Irritability
- Regressive behaviors (bed wetting, etc)
- Reoccurring nightmares
- Fear of harming oneself
- Changes in appetite
- Anxieties/ fears
- Withdrawal or social isolation
- Attention seeking

Ages 11-14

- Issues with sleep
- Withdrawal or social isolation
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Changes in appetite
- Depression/anxiety
- School difficulties/ decreased performance (ie: playground fights/ concentrating in class)
- Fear of harming oneself
- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomachaches, bowel problems)

CHILDREN'S COMMON REACTIONS TO CRISIS

Fear and Anxiety

Children are afraid that the trauma will happen again, and that they or their family will be injured or harmed in some way. A child's most central fear is that he or she will be left alone in the world. These fears are very real to a child, even if they seem exaggerated to adults.

Regressive Behavior

Children's fears and anxieties may cause them to act younger than their age. They may begin behavior such as bed-wetting, thumb sucking, and/or being very clingy or afraid of strangers. An older child, who has been independent in his or her activities away from the family, may wish to spend more time at home. A child does not want to act immaturely, and may not even realize that he or she is, but the anxiety may temporarily disrupt his or her normal, more mature behavior.

Sleeping Problems

Frequently children show their anxiety and fear through having nightmares or being afraid of sleeping alone. They may develop fears of the dark or have difficulty falling or staying asleep at night.

Physical Reactions

Some children have stomachaches, headaches, nausea, eating problems or other physical symptoms of distress. These can be in response to fear, guilt, anger, or feeling vulnerable to future tragedies.

Trigger Responses

Sometimes a child will associate a particular smell, sound, object, or activity with the trauma. Whenever he or she is exposed to that reminder, excessive anxiety, avoidance of the trigger and physical reactions may follow.

Thinking and Concentrating

Children of all ages can experience difficulties with concentration. Many find that they are easily distracted and feel somewhat confused and disoriented.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSING TRAUMATIC EVENTS WITH STUDENTS

Designate a time period, prior to structured academics, to bring the students together for an open discussion of the crisis event and their reactions to it. Be sure to have a transition activity following the discussion, e.g., creative writing, read aloud, physical activities, before moving into the regular routine.

- **Model calm and control**
Students will look to you for cues of how they should respond to the crisis event, as well as look to you to provide stability. Your reactions will influence their reactions. Ask for support if needed with your classroom discussion.
- **Use factual information**
Present the information in an objective, factual manner. Be open and honest, without dwelling on the scale of the crisis, or minimizing the impact on the students. Avoid speculating, or answering questions when you do not definitively have the answer.
- **Talk on their level**
Be specific and factual without using technical language. Elementary students need brief, simple information, with continual reassurance. Older students will need more facts, and an explanation of what is being done to respond to the crisis.
- **Reassure students that they are safe**
Many students will feel afraid after a traumatic event or the death of someone they know. They may have concerns about their own personal safety. Students may have false assumptions about what the crisis event means, which may magnify their reaction to the event. Correct misperceptions, reassure their safety, and provide them with strategies to keep themselves safe.
- **Acknowledge their feelings**
Discuss all the different feelings they may be having, from confusion to sadness, to anger. Explain that all feelings are okay and normal. Share your own reactions to the crisis event, and what you do to help yourself to feel better.

- **Encourage them to ask questions**
Respond as openly, honestly, and calmly as possible, even if the question seems inappropriate or elicits an emotional response from you.
- **Focus on the positive**
Talk about the different groups working together to keep the community safe, or the efforts being made to support a family in their loss.
- **Pay attention**
Anticipate increased behavioral and emotional episodes following a crisis event. Check-in with those students that may be more vulnerable to experiencing a heightened reaction (e.g., students with prior mental health concerns, students who have experienced a recent trauma, or students who were close to the crisis event). Anxiety, tearfulness, and difficulty concentrating are all common symptoms following a crisis. The students' play, drawings, and comments will give you a glimpse into their perceptions of the crisis event. If you are worried about a student's adjustment, you should address these concerns with their parents, and/or recommend the student for counseling support.
- **Encourage them to develop a plan**
Ask students to talk to their parents about creating a safety plan at home, and facilitate a conversation of the results the following day. Ask students to think of ways that they could support a family dealing with a loss.
- **Maintain a routine**
It is essential to allow students the opportunity to share their emotions, and to participate in activities where they can channel their emotions. It is also important to resume normal patterns of activity as soon as possible. In returning to the regularly scheduled academic plan, consider modifying lessons or homework for a short period of time.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Participation in transition activities can help students to express their feelings about the crisis, as well as provide the students with an opportunity to engage in purposeful activities to support those impacted by the crisis event.

PreK-K Activities

Play reenactment – Toy fire trucks, rescue trucks, ambulances, building blocks, dolls and puppets may be used to encourage play reenactment of children’s experiences during the crisis.

Art – Student partnered murals can be used to facilitate discussion about the event. This allows children to share their fears, anger, or frustration, and realize they are not alone in their feelings. Creating cards or artwork for those impacted by the crisis can be used to increase the students’ sense of contribution.

Stories – Read stories about other children’s or animals experiences that are similar to the crisis event that occurred. When students talk about ‘characters’, it can be a nonthreatening way to convey their own feelings. Children can fantasize and tell stories about what a ‘superhero’ may have done to ‘save the day’. Emphasis is on the acceptance of feelings and how a student might move on from the crisis.

Exercise – Feelings of restlessness or anxiety are normal after a crisis. Incorporate music and create your own workout routine that involves large muscle activity, like skipping or jumping.

Elementary School Activities

Play reenactment – Toy fire trucks, rescue trucks, ambulances, building blocks, dolls and puppets may be used to encourage play reenactment of children’s experiences during the crisis. You can also ask children to imagine that they are an animal and what that animal may have done during the crisis.

Art – Student partnered murals can be used to facilitate discussion about the event. This allows children to share their fears, anger, or frustration, and realize they are not alone in their feelings. Creating cards or artwork for those impacted by the crisis can be used to increase the students’ sense of contribution.

Stories – Read stories about other children’s or animals experiences that are similar to the crisis event that occurred. When students talk about ‘characters’, it can be a nonthreatening way to convey their own feelings. Children can fantasize and tell stories about what a ‘superhero’ may have done to ‘save the day’. Emphasis on the acceptance of feelings and how a student might move on is helpful.

Writing – Instruct students to write a ‘happy ending’ to the event. They may use superheroes. They should describe an intensely frightening or angering moment, along with one that is joyous.

Disaster planning – Assign students to create a classroom or home disaster plan. How should they evacuate? How would they contact the adult in charge? What emergency supplies should they have ready? What would their job(s) be?

Share your feelings – In order for children to feel less isolated, it is important to validate feelings. Teachers can do so by sharing their own feelings or experiences.

World discovery – Ask children to bring newspaper clippings or printouts of stories found on the internet about similar crises around the world. This will open discussion and facilitate empathy for others.

Ice breakers – After a crisis, children may, understandingly, be tense. A co-listening exercise may be a good tension breaker. Paired children take turns listening to their partners talk about any topic for approximately three minutes.

Exercise – Feelings of restlessness or anxiety are normal after a crisis. Incorporate music and create your own workout routine that involves large muscle activity, like skipping or jumping.

Middle School Activities

Disaster planning – Assign students to create a classroom or home disaster plan. How should they evacuate? How would they contact the adult in charge? What emergency supplies should they have ready? This activity can help students to regain a sense of mastery and security, while having a practical value.

Community recovery project – Hold a discussion regarding how the class/school might assist community recovery. In creating a class/ school project, concrete, accomplishable tasks are key. Supporting the community can help students to overcome feelings of helplessness and deal with survivors' guilt.

Literature – Assign reading about young people or families with experiences close to that of the crisis situation. Follow up with a discussion about how it was dis/similar to the current crisis situation, how the characters got past the challenges they were faced with, and how students might do the same.

Creative writing – Instruct students to write a story about character(s) experiencing a traumatic event and give it a happy ending. You may also assign students to write about an intense moment, they clearly remember, that lasted no longer than three minutes. Or, ask students to make up a funny disaster with a happy ending.

Science – Construct projects that explore stress, humans' physiological response, and positive, non-destructive coping skills.

Health – Discuss emotional and physical hazards in crisis situations. Share ideas about self-care. Talk about precautions and safety measures that should be employed if during a crisis water becomes contaminated, or food spoils due to lack of refrigeration.

Art – Encourage a group mural or individual expressions, utilizing various mediums. Focal points can include community recovery or positive coping activities. Creating cards or artwork for those impacted by the crisis can be used to increase the students' sense of contribution.

Theater – Discuss reactions to the crisis. Write emotions described on pieces of paper and have students individually draw them out of a hat. Have students act out the emotion written on the piece of paper chosen. Or, students may develop a skit about a heroic act related to the event.

Social studies – Talk about different government agencies that are responsible for responding to crises. Discuss how this might affect your our community.

History and current events – Discuss historical and current events in the news related to the crisis. Have students bring newspaper clippings or printouts of stories found on the internet regarding similar crises around the world. This will open discussion, facilitate empathy for others, and normalize students’ reactions.

Exercise – Feelings of restlessness or anxiety are normal after a crisis. Incorporate music and create your own workout routine that involves large muscle activity, like skipping or jumping.

Peer sharing and listening – After a discussion regarding common reactions to crises, have students practice their sharing and listening skills with partners taking turns through a structured exercise. Relay that victims need to share their stories, sometimes many times. Discuss how they can be there for their family and friends by using their listening skills.

Links to other suggestions for classroom activities

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754826>

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754872>

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754874>

<http://www.education.com/activity/>

<http://campbell.k12.va.us/tes/wpuckette/media/justforme.pdf>

<http://www.tlcinst.org/creative.html>

<http://www.recover-from-grief.com/grieving-children.html>

http://www.massadvocates.org/documents/HTCL_9-09.pdf

<http://www.tlcinst.org/PTRCactivities.html>

<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/mhtraumapbis.pdf>

REFERRING STUDENTS FOR COUNSELING SUPPORT

All children experience trauma differently. Most students with support and reassurance are able to quickly return to their normal functioning after a traumatic event. Other students may be in need of additional support to alleviate their feelings of distress. Teachers are often the first to recognize a student's need to be referred for additional support. In the event of a crisis, a Crisis Response Center will be mobilized at school with counseling support staff, and teachers will be provided with a referral form to the Crisis Response Center. Any student that requests to speak with a counselor should be referred to the Crisis Response Center. Counseling Staff will be following up with the parents of students who have been referred. If symptoms persist or appear after the acute crisis phase, staff should be encouraged to contact the school social worker or counselor.

Indicators of the need for a student referral

- **Signals that a student is depressed or withdrawn**
The student may be excessively tearful, or may “shut down” or be non-communicative. The student may seem extremely lethargic or moody. He/she's appetite, sleep or weight may be significantly affected. He/she's desire to interact with others or participate in enjoyable activities may decrease. Personal hygiene may become overlooked.
- **Signals that a student is anxious or fearful**
The student may shake or fidget excessively. The student may refuse to enter or leave the classroom. The student may report being afraid to participate in common activities. He/she may have a heightened response to noises or other stimuli, or become overprotective of others.
- **Signals of suicidal ideation**
The student may make comments, gestures, or writings/drawings expressing a desire to die, or hurt others. Student may report wanting to be with those who have died.
- **Signals of reckless behavior**
The student may engage in truancy, fighting, aggression, threatening, stealing, lying, abusing of drugs or alcohol, risky sexual activity, or other behaviors that put themselves or others in harm's way.
- **Signals of chronic emotional distress**
The student may have extreme difficulty regulating their emotions. This may look like fits of rage, extreme irritability, or repeated crying episodes. These behaviors are significantly increased when reminded of the traumatic event.
- **Decline in academic performance**
The student may be unable to complete assignments or participate in classroom activities at the same level they had prior to the traumatic event. This may look like difficulty concentrating, and regressive behavior and learning.

CRISIS REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Referred By: _____ Title: _____

Concerns (e.g., tearfulness, withdrawal, excessive fear, talking about death, asking for help):

See Immediately

Date/Time: _____

Sometime Today

Date/Time: _____

Tomorrow

Date: _____

This week

Date: _____

CRISIS REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Referred By: _____ Title: _____

Concerns (e.g., tearfulness, withdrawal, excessive fear, talking about death, asking for help):

See Immediately

Date/Time: _____

Sometime Today

Date/Time: _____

Tomorrow

Date: _____

Today

Date: _____

STUDENT REFERRAL LIST

School: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Student Name	Referred By	Grade	Symptoms	Action Taken

HELPING CHILDREN TO COPE WITH A CRISIS

What a parent can do

- **Model calm and control.** Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Avoid appearing anxious or frightened.
- **Reassure your children that they are safe.** Point out that help insure their immediate safety and that of their community.
- **Let children know that it is ok to feel upset.** Explain that all feelings are ok when a tragedy like this occurs. Even anger is okay, but children may need help and patience from adults to assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
- **Focus on your children over the week following the tragedy.** Tell them you love them and everything will be okay. Try to help them understand what has happened, keeping in mind their developmental level.
- **Make time to talk with your children.** If you do not talk to your children about this incident someone else will. Take some time and determine what you wish to say.
- **Tell children the truth.** Don't try to pretend the event has not occurred or that it is not serious. Children are smart. They will be more worried if they think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening.
- **Stay close to your children.** Your physical presence will reassure them and give you the opportunity to monitor their reaction. Many children will want actual physical contact. Give plenty of hugs. Let them sit close to you, and make sure to take extra time at bedtime to cuddle and to reassure them that they are loved and safe.
- **Maintain a "normal" routine.** To the extent possible stick to your family's normal routine for dinner, homework, chores, bedtime, etc., *but don't be inflexible*. Children may have a hard time concentrating on schoolwork or falling asleep at night.
- **Spend extra time reading or playing quiet games with your children before bed.** These activities are calming, foster a sense of closeness and security, and reinforce a sense of normalcy. Spend more time tucking them in. Let them sleep with a light on.
- **Safeguard your children's physical health.** Stress can take a toll on children as well as adults. Make sure your children get appropriate sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
- **Find out what resources your school has in place to help children cope.** Most schools are likely to be open and often are a good place for children to regain a sense of normalcy.
- **Monitor your own stress level.** Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief, and anger. Talking to friends, family members, religious leaders, and mental health counselors can help. It is okay to let your children know that you are sad, but that you believe things will get better.

For information on helping children and youth with this crisis, contact NASP at (301) 657-0270 or visit NASP's website at www.nasponline.org. Modified from material posted on the NASP website in September, 2001.

AYUDAR A LOS NIÑOS AFRONTAR UNA CRISIS

¿Cómo pueden ayudar los padres?

- **Modelar calma y control.** Los niños imitarán los sentimientos y el comportamiento de los adultos. Trate de mostrarse calmado, bajo control y no ansioso y asustado.
- **Asegurarle sus niños de que están a salvo y seguros,** y (si es cierto) que también están a salvo las personas importantes en su vida. Dependiendo de la situación, señale los factores que aseguran la seguridad inmediata de ellos, al igual que la seguridad de su comunidad.
- **Dejarles saber que sentirse perturbados es normal.** Explíqueles que cuando sucede algo de esta magnitud es normal sentir muchos sentimientos diferentes y a veces conflictivos. Es normal sentirse enojado, pero posiblemente los niños necesitarán la ayuda y paciencia de los adultos para ayudarles a expresar apropiadamente sus sentimientos.
- **Enfoque su atención en sus niños durante la semana después de la tragedia.** Asegúrenles lo mucho que los quiere, y confírmeles que todo va a estar bien. Trate de hacerles entender lo que sucedió, manteniendo en cuenta el nivel del desarrollo del niño.
- **Saque el tiempo para estar y hablar con sus hijos.** Recuerde que si usted no habla con sus hijos sobre este incidente, alguien lo hará. Tome un poco de tiempo y decida lo que les quiere decir.
- **Decirle la verdad a los niños.** No trate de ocultar o pretender que nada sucedió, o que no fue serio. ¡Los niños saben! Se preocuparán más si creen que usted está tan afectado o tiene miedo decirles lo que está sucediendo.
- **Manténgase cerca de sus hijos.** Su presencia física les asegurará a ellos y le dará la oportunidad de observar sus reacciones a los acontecimientos. Muchos de los niños querrán más contacto físico. Denle muchos besos y abrazos. Deje que se sienten cerca de usted, y provea más tiempo para estar con ellos al acostarlos a dormir. Asegúreles que son queridos y que estarán bien.
- **Mantenga su rutina cotidiana.** En lo más posible, mantenga su rutina diaria, por ejemplo, la hora de cenar, la hora de realizar tareas escolares, la hora de acostarse, etc. Pero tenga flexibilidad. Los niños podrán tener dificultad prestando atención a sus tareas o al acostarse a dormir.
- **Dedique más tiempo para leerle o jugar un juego calmado antes de la hora de dormir.** Estas actividades calman, fomentan un nivel de seguridad, y refuerzan el sentido de normalidad. Si quieren dormir con una luz encendida, deje que lo hagan.
- **Esté al tanto de la salud física de sus hijos.** El estrés puede tener consecuencias físicas tanto con los niños como con los adultos. Asegúrese que estén descansando, comiendo bien y haciendo ejercicio.
- **Averigüe qué recursos tiene la escuela para ayudar a los niños a afrontar el desastre.** La mayoría de las escuelas permanecerán en clases y serán un buen lugar para que los niños recobren el sentido de normalidad. El estar con sus maestros y amigos ayuda a esto.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

It is with deep regret that we inform you about a recent loss to our school community. Last night, one of our second grade students was shot and killed by a family member. This loss is sure to raise many emotions, concerns, and questions for our entire school, especially our students.

Our school has a Crisis Intervention Team made up of professionals trained to help with the needs of students, parents, and school personnel at difficult times such as this. At our school, we have counselors available for any student who may need or want any type of assistance surrounding this loss. We encourage you, as parents, to also feel free to use our resources.

We have enclosed some information that may be useful to you in helping your child at home. If you would like additional information or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact.

We are saddened by the loss to our school community and will make every effort to help you and your child as you need.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I inform you that one of our second grade students was shot and killed last night by a family member.

In order to provide support to students and assist them through this very difficult time, I have arranged for counselors to be on site to meet with students and teachers. I have been visiting classrooms and talking to students, answering their questions, reassuring them and allowing them to express their love for their classmate.

The counselor's will be available for several days in order to assist students and parents and provide whatever support they need.

You can assist you child in dealing with this situation by:

- Allowing your child to share his/her fears and or feelings
- Reassuring your child that he/she is safe
- Telling your child that teachers and school staff are available to help them.

Attached is further information that may be helpful to assist you with questions or reactions your child may have concerning this incident.

This is a difficult time for all of us in our school family. My staff and I stand ready and prepared to assist you and your child in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I inform you that one of our instructional assistants died yesterday at home. We held a meeting with the students this morning to share the information, offer them support and answer their questions. We will continue to visit classrooms to reassure the students, and provide them with opportunities to express their feelings surrounding this loss.

Our site social worker will be available to all of the students, staff, and parents in the next several days to assist them through this difficult time. Please be aware your child may experience an array of emotions due to this loss. I encourage you to notify the school if you have concerns regarding your child's reaction to this news.

Attached is further information that may be helpful for you in addressing this loss with your child.

This is a difficult time for all us in the School family. Our staff stands ready and prepared to support you and your child in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Students and Parents,

It is with profound sadness that I share with you news of the death of one of our third grade teachers who has worked at our school for the last 15 years. She was a valuable member of the school family and has many friends who will miss her dearly. She was diagnosed with cancer in the fall of 2010 and had been on leave of absence since February 2011. It is possible that one or more of your children had her for a teacher in either kindergarten or third grade over the last few years and that is why we wanted share this news with you so that you will be prepared to discuss the situation with your child while at home.

Our site counselor will be available to all of the students, staff, and parents for the first few days of school to assist them through this difficult time. Please be aware that your student may experience an array of emotions due to this loss ranging from crying, numbness, and feelings of despair to just wanting to be close to family and friends. All are normal responses. I encourage you to notify the school if you have concerns regarding your child's reaction to this news.

This is a difficult time for all of us in the school family. My staff and I stand ready and prepared to assist you and your child in any way we can. She was a wonderful person and educator and will be greatly missed by many people. Our hearts and thoughts are with her family. We will notify when plans to honor her here at our school are finalized.

Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

It is with sadness that we inform you that one of the students in your child's class has experienced the death of a parent this week. We have talked with the class to inform them about their classmate's loss and allowed them to express their feelings and concern through discussion and by making cards.

In order to provide support to our students and assist them if they become frightened, concerned or stressed, we have arranged that our psychologist and counselor be on call to address any needs.

Although classroom instruction will continue as always, the next few days may be difficult for some of our students. Please keep in mind that it is not uncommon for children to exhibit fears, poor concentration, nightmares, physical complaints, withdrawal, eating and sleeping difficulties, crying and irritability.

You can assist your child in dealing with this situation by:

- Allowing your child to share his/her fears and feelings in a non-judgmental way.
- Reassuring your child that he/ she is safe.
- Spending some time together, enjoying each other's company.
- Telling your child that teachers and office staff are available to help them.

We stand ready and prepared to assist your children in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

I am writing this to inform you of an incident here on campus and request your help.

Yesterday at early dismissal time, while waiting outside her classroom door alone, a female student has reported a man attempting to grab her arm and insist she come with him. Our student did exactly as she was instructed during our KidFit safety program. She screamed “NO”, pulled away and found safety with an adult she felt to be trust-worthy. The man is described as being caucasian, very over-weight, balding and driving a dark brown car parked on Rock Springs Road.

The safety of your children is our first priority. We have put several safety precautions into place here at our school.

~Teachers have been alerted have spoken to students about campus safety.

~Teachers have been asked to always send students to the restroom with a partner.

~Teachers will be vigilant with supervision will be escorting students to the front of the school at dismissal.

~The gate at the staff parking lot will be monitored throughout the day and closed during school hours.

~Announcements have been and will be made by the principal about safety and restroom use.

We need parent support in some important ways.

~Please take some time at home to talk about safety and stranger danger.

~We ask that whenever coming on campus use the front gate entrances only.

~We ask that all 1st – 5th parents meet and greet their children at the end of the day in the lunch area or front of school ONLY. Please do wait in the courtyard / at the classroom doors.

~We ask that all Kinder students be picked up at the areas designated by the Kinder staff.

~It is also important that whenever coming on campus during the instructional day **8:10-2:25** that you always sign in at the office and wear a “Visitor” tag.

~Be sure to have a drop off and pick up plan each day – the place and time you will meet.

If you have any suggestions or questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us here at school.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Dear Family,

Our hearts are filled with sadness at the loss of your son. We cannot imagine the pain you feel now, but we wanted to let you know that our loving thoughts are with you. Words can not express how deeply sorry we are for your loss. He will be missed terribly.

We can only say how much we will miss your son. He was a wonderful student among us, always giving us a shining example of kindness, caring, loving, and fun. And, we know that his passing will not only leave a void in our lives, but in the hearts of all those who knew him. He will always remain within the hearts of his teachers and classmates.

Enclosed are the copies of his school photos from his cumulative school records.

We wanted to let you know that you have our greatest sympathy, and our hearts are truly saddened. If there is anything that we can do to help you or your children in anyway, please do not hesitate to call us at any time.

Our sincere thoughts and prayers are with your family.

With our deepest sympathy,

Principal

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