

(If any of these persists or is disruptive, seek assistance)

Common Stress Reactions by Age Group

Pre-School Age:

- ⇒ Heightened separation anxiety
- ⇒ General fearfulness
- ⇒ Effect of fear can inhibit retention of recent learning (bladder control, baby talk, etc.)
- ⇒ Heightened startle reflex
- ⇒ Night Terrors
- ⇒ Aggression

School Aged Children:

- ⇒ Wider range of intrusive images and thoughts
- ⇒ “Should have/would have/could have” thoughts
- ⇒ Revert to traumatic play (reenacting through play)
- ⇒ Respond to concrete reminders (hair style, clothing, voice, blood, etc.)
- ⇒ Intense new fears that link to the tragedy
- ⇒ Avoidance, because of fear that the incident will be replicated
- ⇒ Lack of restful sleep
- ⇒ Lack of daytime concentration / attention span

Adolescent Age Children:

- ⇒ Regression to child like behaviors
- ⇒ Fear of “going crazy” because of their responses
- ⇒ Bouts of fear and exaggerated responses to that fear
- ⇒ Isolation because of feeling alone in their reactions (I am the only one feeling this way)
- ⇒ Sensitivity to failure of the family, school, or community to protect them
- ⇒ Excessive protective aggression in a similar circumstance (overreacting to need to protect others)
- ⇒ Extreme response in one of two ways —avoidance behavior or reckless behavior
- ⇒ Lack of restful sleep / sleep disturbance
- ⇒ Self medicating with alcohol or other drugs / medications

General Reactions to Traumatic Grief in Students

Children at different developmental levels may react differently to a loved one’s traumatic death. But there are some common signs and symptoms of traumatic grief that children might show at school. Teachers may observe the following in the student:

- ⇒ Being overly preoccupied with how the loved one died
- ⇒ Reliving or re-enacting the traumatic death through play, activities, and/or artwork
- ⇒ Showing signs of emotional and/or behavioral distress when reminded of the loss
- ⇒ Attempting to avoid physical reminders of the traumatic death, such as activities, places, or people related to the death
- ⇒ Withdrawing from important aspects of their environment
- ⇒ Showing signs of emotional constriction or “numbing”
- ⇒ Being excessively jumpy or being easily startled
- ⇒ Showing signs of a lack of purpose and meaning to one’s life



Information for Teachers

A volunteer team of public safety and affiliate professionals serving regional fire, EMS, and law enforcement, industry, educational, and other organizations involved in any type of critical incident.

Confidential services provided at no charge:

Pre-Incident Stress Education

Individual Peer Support

Crisis Management Briefing

Defusing

Debriefing

Follow-Up

Referral

To Request Service/Response:

1-800-567-4673

For Information Contact:

allencountycism@gmail.com

wocism@gmail.com

www.cism.care

Information for Teachers...

When tragedy strikes may people are placed in de facto roles of responsibility not commonly encountered in a “routine” day. Sadly, tragedies such as the sudden injury or death of a student, teacher, or parent will quickly turn an educational system on its heels. We recognize the tremendous energy school personnel put into a regular classroom day, and that it will be magnified by the tragedy.

We have compiled a number of resources and information for you to use as you engage students over the next few days and weeks. Above all, remember it’s okay and appropriate to take care of yourself as you tend to the children in your charge.

Self Care For Teachers:

- Surround yourself with positive people to help you remain upbeat.
- Get plenty of uninterrupted rest to give you the energy that will be needed in the coming hours and days.
- Eat healthy foods in moderation. Comfort foods may taste good, but the metabolic result can be increased load on your digestive, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems.
- Exercise in moderation. A walk in nature away from TV or electronic stimuli may help you “center” yourself.
- Share your thoughts and concerns with trusted adults. Internalizing anxieties can disrupt cognitive, physical, emotional, and/or behavioral health.
- Try to keep to your routine and structure as much as possible for the next several weeks.
- Limit exposure to mainstream and social media to avoid information overload and/or increased stress from inaccurate information.
- If you find yourself becoming overwhelmed in the classroom, ask for someone to cover your class while you step out to reset. This does not suggest that you cannot demonstrate normal reactions in front of your students. They will be looking toward you on how to react and potentially grieve. However, if you are likely to excessively cry or react, it might be best to step out for a moment or so.

Suggestions For Teachers:

- We are reminded that grief looks differently for each individual and they can (and often do) flash backwards at times.
- Experience suggests that giving students particularly challenging work such as exams or high point projects immediately after a tragedy may be more than the students can process. Postponing difficult work for a brief time may help students and teachers alike as they grieve.
- Maintain normal school routines as much as possible. The child(ren) may feel life is out of control. The structure and routine school provides may help to stabilize that feeling of chaos.
- You might start an individual or class discussion by focusing on the life gifts a deceased or injured student/teacher may have brought to the student(s). By asking open ended questions, you will allow students to express themselves rather than limit their answers....
 - What did _____ like to do?
 - What did you like most about _____?
 - What music/food/sports did they like?
- Feeling helpless can bring pain and frustration. The below question starters are action oriented. Sometimes mobilizing students in ways that help the family are helpful because it offers options for them to engage...

What can we do now?

Make cards

Make a memory board

Build a basket of goodies (allowing each person to contribute to the basket)

Handpicked flowers (limited budgets)

Text messages of care or concern

Do errands

Do simple tasks such as yardwork

What can we do in the next few months?

More cards

Designate a day/week for food delivery

Tend to yardwork

Stay engaged as the family would like (birthday cards, graduation, etc.)

- We often say “if you need anything...” Many times people don’t realize what they may need. If you come up with a list of things that may be needed and then offer to do those things, it relieves the family of the burden and stress of figuring out how to keep people busy.
- Answer a child’s questions. Let the child know that you are available to talk about the death if he or she wants to. When talking to these children, accept their feelings (even anger), listen carefully, and remind them that it is normal to experience emotional and behavioral difficulties following the death of a loved one. Do not force a child to talk about the death if he or she doesn’t want to. This may be more harmful than helpful for the child.
- It may be common for some students to take longer to adjust than others. If you notice persistent changes lasting longer than a few days, alert school guidance or administrative staff in order to facilitate appropriate care for the child.
- Seek help if a student seems hopeless, isolates for a long period of time, is not physically caring for themselves, or is not doing things they like to do.

Please note:

It is never inappropriate to ask someone about whom you are concerned about suicide or self harm (i.e. if they are planning to die by suicide). If the person tells you they are, please wait with them while seeking immediate medical or mental health care for the person .