

Adapted from the School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum - PREPaRE (Prevent, Reaffirm, Evaluate, Provide and Respond, Examine) ((301)657-0270, www.nosponline.org)

Recommendations for helping children cope with a tragic event:

1. Give yourself a bit of time to come to terms with the event before you attempt to reassure children.
2. Take care of yourself so that you can take care of children.
3. Encourage children to express their feelings and listen without passing judgment.
4. Let children know that it is normal to feel upset.
5. Allow time for children to experience and talk about their feelings.
6. Don't try to rush back to ordinary routines too soon. However, a gradual return to routine could be reassuring.
7. If children are fearful, reassure them that you will take care of them.
8. Stay together as much as possible.
9. Reassure children that the traumatic event was not their fault.
10. Do not criticize regressive behavior or shame children with words like 'babyish'.
11. Do your best to let children know that you understand their perception of the tragedy.
12. While it is important to understand children's crisis event perceptions, it is also important to correct misperceptions.
13. Allow children to cry or be sad.
14. Encourage children to feel in control. Let them make some decisions (meals, what to wear etc.)
15. Encourage children to develop coping and problem-solving skills and age-appropriate methods for managing anxiety.

Self-Care

Adapted from National Center for PTSD, Psychological First Aid: Field Operators Guide, 2007

Providing support to students during a tragic event can be both emotionally and physically exhausting – especially when you may also be personally impacted by the event. It is important to recognize common and extreme stress reactions and how to best take care of yourself.

Common Stress Reactions include: increase or decrease in activity level, difficulty sleeping, substance use, anger, frustration, confusion, lack of intention, difficulty making decisions, depressive or anxiety symptoms, headaches, stomach aches, and/or decreased social activities.

Extreme Stress Reactions include: helplessness, confusion, isolation, alienation, preoccupation or compulsive re-experiencing of trauma, attempts to over-control, relying on substances, not wanting to get out of bed, domestic violence, unnecessary risk-taking.

Make every effort to: seek out and give social support, increase collegial support, schedule ‘me time’, increase leisure activities, stress management and exercise, pay attention to health and nutrition, practice good sleep routines, make time for self-reflection, find things you enjoy or that make you laugh, anticipate that you will experience recurring thoughts or dreams and that they will decrease over time, keep a journal to get worries off your mind.

Make every effort to avoid: excessive use of alcohol, illicit drugs or excessive amounts of prescription drugs, negatively assessing your contribution to relief work, making helping others more important than your own self-care