

# *After the Tragedy...* in the Classroom

***Start the day with your usual routine and schedule.*** At the beginning of the day, settle the class, and then let them know when there will be a time for discussion and questions about events. Return to some modified routine as soon as possible to help children feel calm and safe.

***Be prepared to have a high volume of talk about the events.*** Try to keep this talk under control so that your classroom remains in control. When time has come to close discussion have children write their questions and turn them in or draw them and tomorrow discuss once again.

***Look for children who may not want to be involved in the discussions.*** No matter what level of exposure, some children will want to talk extensively about their experience, while others will not want to talk at all. Be sensitive to the children who avoid discussion and find a way to provide a secure setting that lets them cope more slowly with the events (or let them visit the library or another place during this time).

***Collect questions from the children, if necessary.*** Answer those questions for which you know the factual answers, but keep in mind your audience. Do not overwhelm young children. Stick to short factual answers and don't speculate with children.

***Allow time for children to tell their stories about the day's events.*** Encourage them to be supportive of each other. However, limit descriptions of gruesome details in general discussion. Children that have seen too many accounts on television or on the internet of people injured or harmed can discuss these episodes privately with counselors.

For More Information:



***Kentucky Center for School Safety***

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***Discuss customs regarding death observed by other cultures*** to enhance children's ability to understand the reactions of classmates of diverse backgrounds. Although issues concerning life and death should always be integrated into the curriculum, in times of crisis these themes should be emphasized. (This discussion may not happen in most classes, but may in high school with a counselor or multicultural class.)

***Reassure children*** that the responsible adults are making sure that they are safe. Although we cannot provide 100% assurance, all children need to know that adults are taking care of them. (This may have to be done many times for the young ones)

***Encourage children*** to let you know if they are experiencing distress at any time.

***Turn to the school mental health staff/counselor*** with questions and concerns about particular students who seem especially anxious, agitated or sad or who may have other situations to deal with in their lives.

***Find out the support staff who will be available*** to children throughout the day. Direct children to that resource for further conversation and support. Have children sign out to go to that setting, but make sure that they know that they can go at any time.

***Keep parents informed about your actions*** so they can be prepared for further discussion. Encourage parents to limit their children's exposure to media reports and accounts of the event and to watch television with them when possible.

***Remember that a wide range of reactions can be expected.*** Be ready to help by listening, observing for high levels of distress, referring children to appropriate counselors and returning to a settled routine while allowing for any needed discussion. Finally, talk to others and take care of yourself (make that other adults).

*(Adapted from "Caring about Kids after Trauma or Death" by the Institute of Trauma and Stress at NYU)*

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