
Teacher Role in Critical Incident Response

GUIDELINES FOR THE FIRST DAY

1. Sharing Initial Information

- Be in the room as students enter
- If students ask questions before school begins, let them know that you'll be talking about the event together
- Share prepared statement with students or be in the room as someone else does
- Discuss and validate various feelings and responses people will have
 - Model this by sharing your feelings in an appropriate way
 - Respond with compassion to confusion, tears, and disruptive behaviour, recognizing that all of these are typical reactions
- Provide time for questions and discussion, see **Class Discussion Format**.

2. Managing the Day

- If your class is closely connected to the event, consider doing an activity to help students process, see **Activities for Processing Grief and Loss**.
- Don't force a "regular" day upon grieving students, but at the same time, don't allow class to be unstructured. Offer choices such as journaling, drawing, participating in a discussion, or supervised physical activities.
- When most students seem ready, return to regular schedule but make accommodations around academic expectations.
- Return to the subject later in the day if students appear to need more talking or processing time.
- Refer students to the Support Room if they are struggling in the classroom.
- Contact the counsellor or principal with specific student concerns.

3. Caring for Yourself

- Ask for coverage if you need a break or are feeling overwhelmed
- Ask for support if you are unsure of how to respond to a particular student need

4. End of Day

- Refer ongoing student and staff concerns as directed
- Contact parents of students who struggled beyond what is expected
- Participate in staff meeting debrief
- Plan an evening that addresses your need to reflect and process the day
 - Spend time with family and friends, sharing how you are feeling/doing
 - Get fresh air, exercise and sleep
 - Allow yourself to work through your emotions
 - Do something that you enjoy



Teacher Role in Critical Incident Response, continued

GUIDELINES FOR THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW

- Monitor students and refer concerns as directed
- If students were directly connected to the loss, provide further opportunities to process and remember
- Explain how to treat a bereaved student or staff person returning to school. Emphasize that trying to avoid them or being overly attentive will not be helpful. Discuss how to figure out whether or not a person wants to talk about their loss or the person they've lost.
- Be prepared for varied and changing responses in the days and weeks that follow, particularly for those who were most closely connected to the person or who have experienced previous loss or trauma
- Connect with and support each other as colleagues
- Monitor yourself and address your needs as you identify them (see below)

TYPICAL RESPONSES TO GRIEF FOR STAFF

- Panic, confusion, helpfulness
- Overwhelming sense of responsibility for the well-being of other students and staff
- Unresolved or returning thoughts about past deaths or personal losses
- Unresolved feelings about issues that are specific to the family involved
- Concern about how to deal with negative reactions from others in the school community
- Fear of the impact that talking about the loss will have on others (in reality, our fears are greatest when things are not discussed)
- Need to keep emotions under control because we are afraid of what will happen if you let them come to the surface
- Wanting to make it alright for those we care about who are grieving
- Feeling unprepared, inadequate, unable to function
- Feeling empty or frozen
- Preoccupied, distracted, spaced out
- Compulsive, not able to let go of minor details

