

Teacher's Role

While the Crisis Events Response Team is in the school to assist teachers & students following a tragic event, teachers still have an important role.

Announcing the Event - you will receive a written announcement that you are asked to read to students. Team members are available to assist with the announcement if necessary.

Classroom Discussion - teachers are encouraged to participate in classroom discussions around the event if they feel comfortable doing so. Refer to the next sections for some strategies to help students express grief.

Allow Students to Access Care Centre - students experiencing intense grief reactions will be permitted to go to a care center.

Adjust the Curriculum - postpone assessments for a few days. Assignments may have to be shorter and more structured.

Referrals - The teacher should monitor his/her students following a crisis, especially siblings, close friends, those displaying intense emotional reactions, those experiencing other recent losses, and students with a history of mental health issues. Some students may be delayed in their reaction to a crisis. Others may not be able to work through their grief. These students may have to be referred to the school ESST.

Lesson Plan - You may be asked to facilitate or co-facilitate a lesson plan to give students facts about the event, answer questions, and teach students coping skills.

Personal Grief - as a teacher be aware of your own grief following a tragedy. It is perfectly acceptable to share your grief with the class if you feel comfortable in doing so. Don't be afraid to seek support from friends, colleagues, and family. NBTA counselling support can also be arranged if needed.

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Tips For Dealing With Students

1. Provide opportunities for students to express grief.
2. Give the facts, discourage speculation, and avoid euphemisms.
3. Listen to what your students have to say about the event.
4. Discourage glorification, especially if the death is by suicide.
5. Accept that students' reactions are going to be different. Some will behave inappropriately, others will not be affected, and some will be very upset.
6. Students with diverse needs may behave differently.
7. Be flexible. Your students' memory, concentration and ability to learn may be affected by grief. Allow for some disruptions in routine.
8. Some students will express grief through anger and may require intervention.
9. Be alert for delayed reactions to grief.
10. Be supportive and empathetic.

Classroom Activities

- discuss ways the school could remember the person who died
- encourage expressions of grief (e.g. writing, art, etc)
- design a yearbook page devoted to the deceased
- collect memorabilia relating to the deceased for display
- write stories about the deceased or the incident
- raise money for medical research. (if the death was disease related)
- consider creating a scholarship in the name of the deceased
- collect notes, stories, pictures, & cards to be sent to the family
- classroom discussions about reactions to grief (see *Students' Reaction to Loss & Tragedy*)
- discuss funeral rites, what is expected, student participation, what to do, what to say

- discuss ways to cope with traumatic situations (feel free to call on support personnel for assistance)
- if the victim's siblings are in the class, discuss what to do when they return
- help the class understand that people react in different ways to grief. Some may not be affected by the event. Others, who have not known the victim, may be very upset. Some people have difficulty expressing their feelings.



Tragic Events Response Plan

A Guide for Teachers

