

# COPING WITH CRISIS

## THE ACTIVITY DIRECTOR'S ROLE

- ❖ Primary intervention – activities devoted to preventing a crisis
  - Prepare a School-wide Plan
    - Include administration, staff, student representatives, community, police
  - Address various scenarios
    - Accidental death of school community member (drowning, plane crash)
    - Car accident (drunken or reckless driving)
    - Death of school community member by non-violence (cancer)
    - Natural Disasters (flood, fire, earthquake)
    - Bomb threat
    - Gang Violence
    - Attack on school by outsider
    - Kidnapping or missing student
    - Child sexual abuse or alleged sexual abuse
    - Bullying and aggression
    - Threatened violence
    - Suicide (threats and attempts)
  
- ❖ Secondary intervention – steps taken in the immediate aftermath
  - Goals: establish social support, rebuild community bonds, and promote hope for the future
  - Attend to the needs of all students, staff, parents, community
    - Provide nourishment
  - Share the verified facts in smaller groups (what happened, status of victims and perpetrators, school schedule (keep as consistent as possible), counseling services)
    - “What I am about to tell you is difficult, and may not be well received. But it is important that you know the truth.”
    - “We will work through this tragic situation together.”
    - Use talking points from one original source
    - Share with everyone in the school community using age appropriate language
    - Student small group meetings to provide peer validation of emotions felt
  - The community meeting – at school, no media, share the facts, share safety procedures in place, perhaps separate children and adults

- Media – one spokesperson. Adults – “No comment.” Children – “I don’t want to talk with you.” “Please leave me alone.” “Don’t take my picture.”
  - Control media by holding press conference. No other media access. Offer to shield family members of victims and suspects. Use reporter’s name for information that you want emphasized. Focus on the message of safety.
- Memorial service - Involve students, staff, and appropriate community members as invitees and appropriate speakers. Carefully selected music. Within a week. Notify families
  - Discuss visitation/memorial/funeral procedures and etiquette with students.
  - Discuss such terms as appropriate dress, ashes, burial, casket, cemetery, condolences, cremation, dead, embalming, eulogy, floral tribute, funeral service, funeral procession, grave, gravesite, headstone, memorial donation, memorial service, obituary, pallbearer, register book, sympathy card, viewing, visitation.
  - Involve all students - memory books, balloon ceremony, ribbons, cards, passages from books, quotations, music, lyrics, flowers, posters, plants, teddy bears (to be given away to appropriate recipients), candles, photos, poems, drama, websites/blogs
  - Right hemisphere activity – creative drawing, painting, writing, sculpture. Students can draw the victims or themselves
  - Advise students of appropriate behavior beforehand
    - Appropriate responses to family might be: “I’m very sorry. My sympathy to you and your family. I enjoyed knowing \_\_\_\_\_ and I will miss him/her. \_\_\_\_\_ was a wonderful person.”
  - If held on campus, allow alternate activity option
- ❖ Tertiary intervention – long-term follow-up assistance
  - Don’t memorialize a suicide victim
  - Memorial location – Have prearranged plans, if possible. If not, place in appropriate place where students have a choice to look or not look
  - Gather funds in the name of the victim (scholarship fund, medical research, project in the name of the victim)
  - Projects can include something that addresses the cause of the crisis – flooding (sandbags), fire (smoke detectors/batteries)
- Review the School-wide Plan
  - Include administration, staff, student representatives, community, police
- Be aware of the Grieving Process –Denial, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance