How to Recover from a School Crisis

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“There is no such thing as a perfect crisis response but it is important to get the facts, do something, and not wait to respond.”

How we lose students: #1 accidents #2 homicide #3 suicide #4 illnesses

Take Action:

1. Verify the facts
2. Establish a phone tree to staff (immediately)

~Don’t wait…staff needs to mental prepare for what happened and typically finds

that support in family & friends

~the message can be as quick & simple as “Please check your email immediately.”

1. Prepare announcement for distribution

~News should be honest & factual; use accurate words such as “killed” or “died”

1. Conduct faculty meeting

~help faculty first

~Pep talk

~Treat all the deaths the same—strive for recovery and get back to “normal” ASAP!

~Know that it is ok to “sit it out/take a back seat” if there is a personal

connection/situation that can prevent you from doing your very best

~Goal: Help each other, help these students, & make it better than expected.

1. Notify parents and students

~Don’t wait…

~Teachers/Staff should notify students

~News should be honest & factual; use accurate words such as “killed” or “died”

~Pay attention to those who will need additional support with dealing with the

Situation

~Parents should be notified in a timely manner so that they can address & respond

to potential needs of children.

Parents will ask: How can I help my child? How will this impact them?

Advice: Reach out. Don’t preach. Let them talk to you.

Levels of Prevention/Intervention

1. Primary Prevention (what we do for prevention)
2. Immediate Intervention (what we do that day/the day after)
3. Secondary Intervention (the days/week after)
4. Tertiary Intervention (what we do in the long-term)

-schools are known to have “short term” memory

-important to monitor (academics, social, & overall) and follow up!

-identify those in need of additional support or services

-be mindful of special occasions: graduations, anniversary of death, or another

significant event

“Follow your heart”—Let your heart be your guide.

Our job:

~assess the impact

~provide them with emotional support; remember all emotions are acceptable

because will all handle grief differently

~allow them to write/draw

~allow them the chance to talk/reminisce about the students; give them the chance

to teach you about their friend; a great way to do this is “Circle Time”; LISTEN!

Be visible & present

~be where the students are

~monitor social media

“Gift of Hope”

-groups, rallies, memorials

Training & Confidence; Empower you! We are going to help them.

Resources:

AFSP.org-After a Suicide: Tool Kit for Schools

“The manner in which schools respond to a death can…set the stage of healing, recovery, and a return to relative normalcy.”