

Welcome!

Recovering from a School Crisis

brought to you by SchoolMessenger

Professional Development
series



Professional Development series

Our Goal: *"To provide useful information on how to maximize the use of instant contact solutions, whether it be school-to-parent or student-to-school, across a wide variety of issues, topics and situations..."*



AJ Morgan
SchoolMessenger
Product Marketing Manager

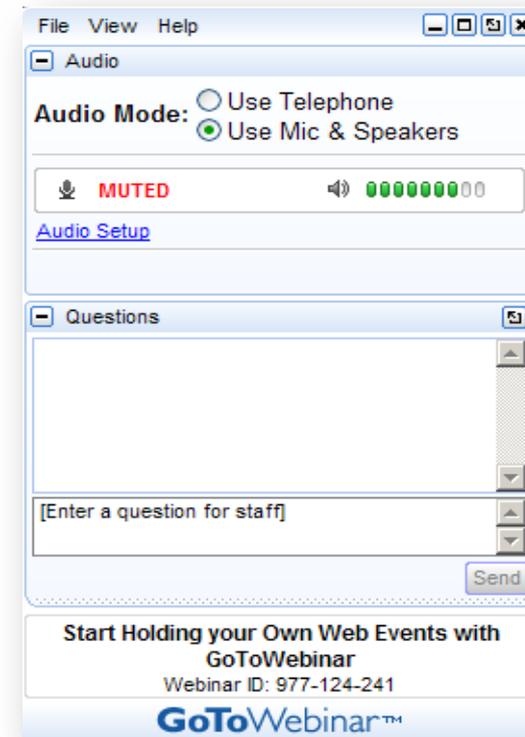


- SchoolReach is now a SchoolMessenger Company
- Serving over 50% of the students in the country
- SchoolReach & SchoolMessenger specialize in the needs of K-12 schools
- Offices in California & Missouri



Q&A at the end, use side bar tools to text in questions.

Please take our brief survey at the end of the webinar.





Dr. Scott Poland
School Safety Expert
Nova Southeastern University



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

Case Examples

1

A fifth grader was killed last night trying to get his dog out of the street

2

A student was killed in a scooter accident the first night of vacation

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Notification Procedures

- **Verify the facts**
- **Establish a calling tree**
- **Prepare an announcement for distribution**
- **Conduct a faculty meeting**
- **Notify parents & students**



Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

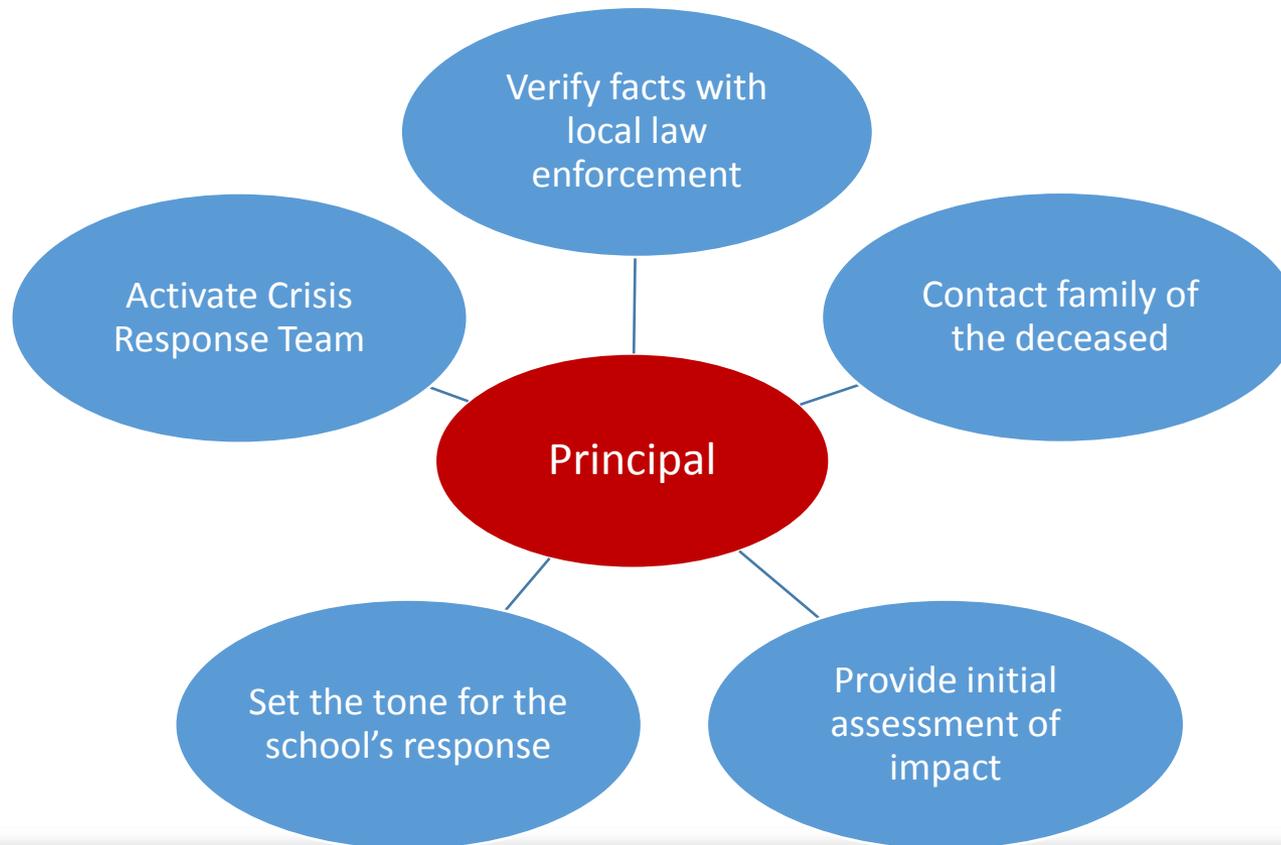
Notification Procedures

Notify parents & students:

- Teachers should notify students
- News should be honest and factual
- Accurate & concrete terms such as “killed” or “died” should be used
- Additional support should be provided to teachers who are uncomfortable sharing news with students
- Parents should be notified in a timely manner so they may address and respond to any potential needs of their children

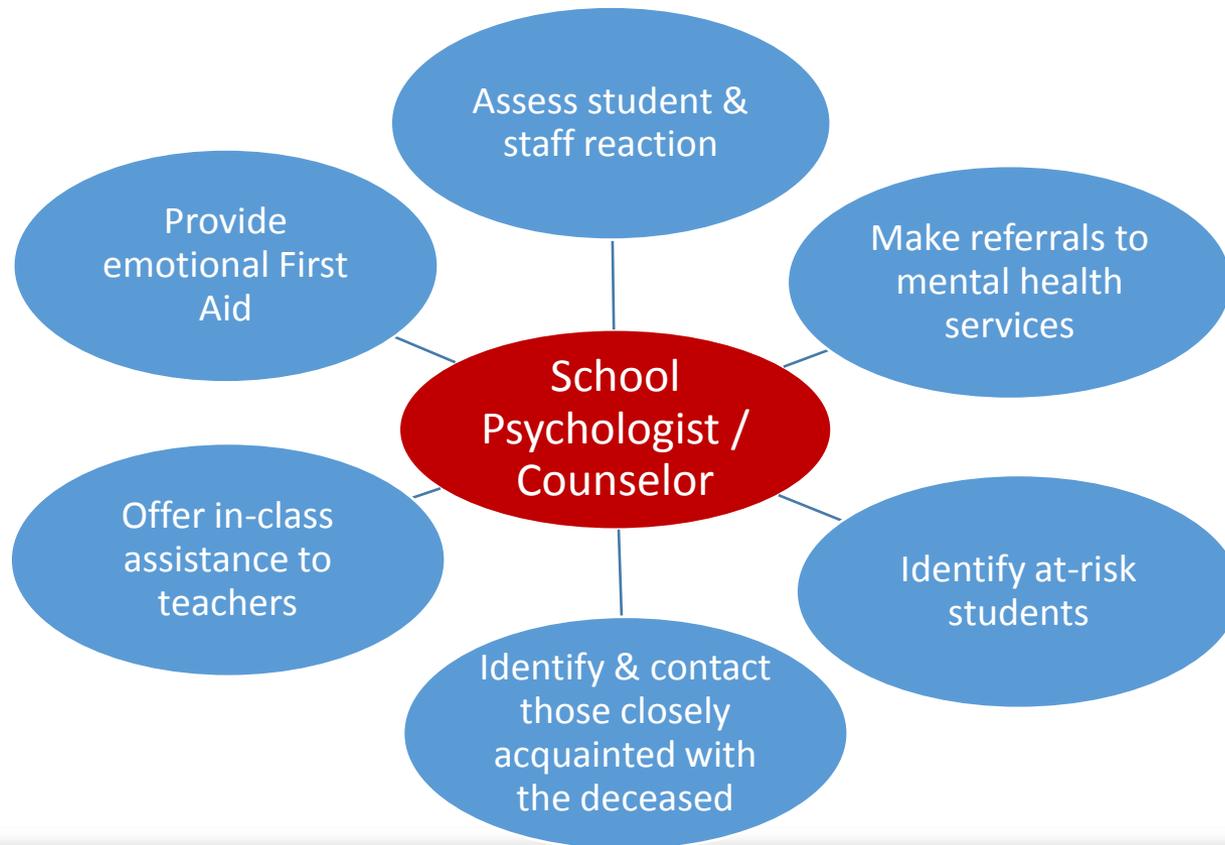
Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Roles of School Personnel



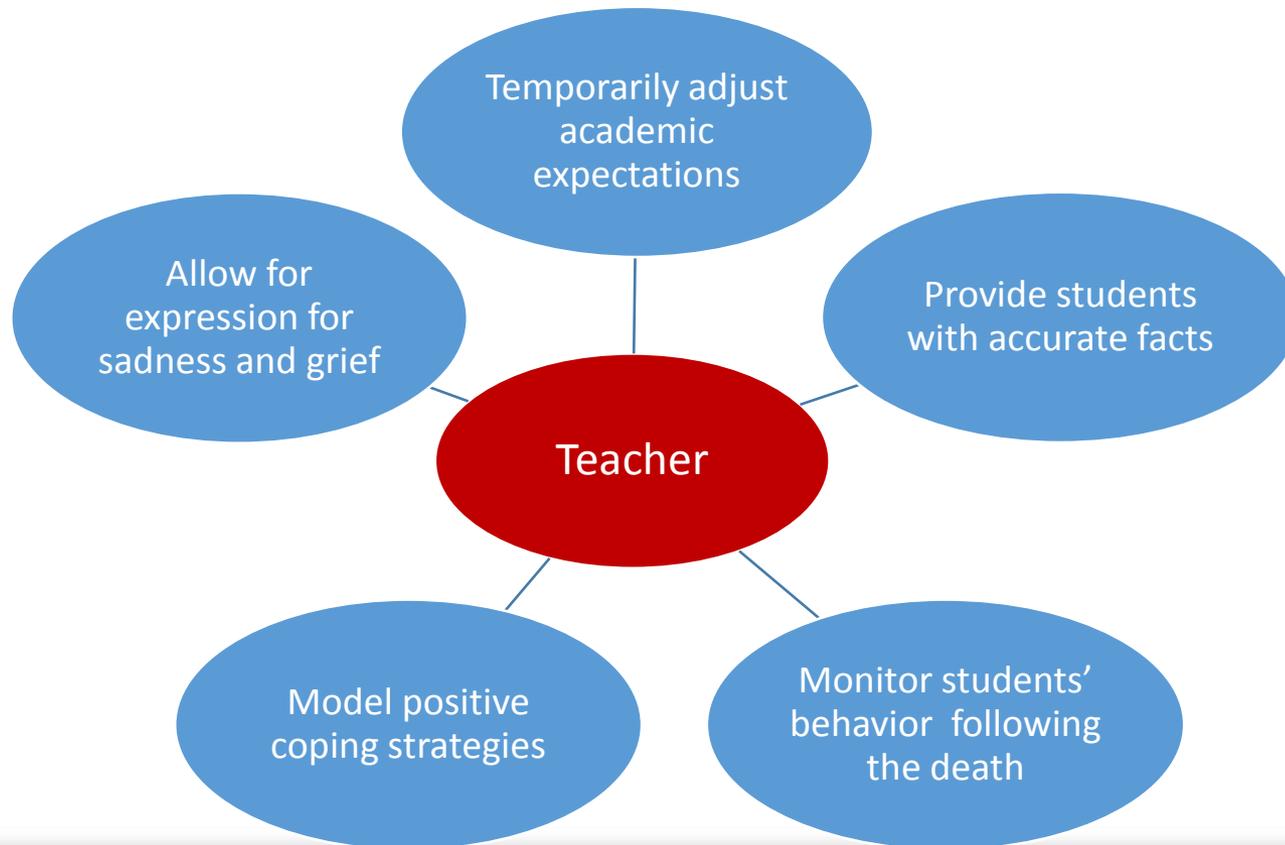
Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Roles of School Personnel



Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Roles of School Personnel



Basic Considerations

Bereavement among school children

Death of a family member or friend

- Most children will suffer such a loss before graduating from high school

Death of a parent

- Between 4 and 7% will lose a parent before age 18

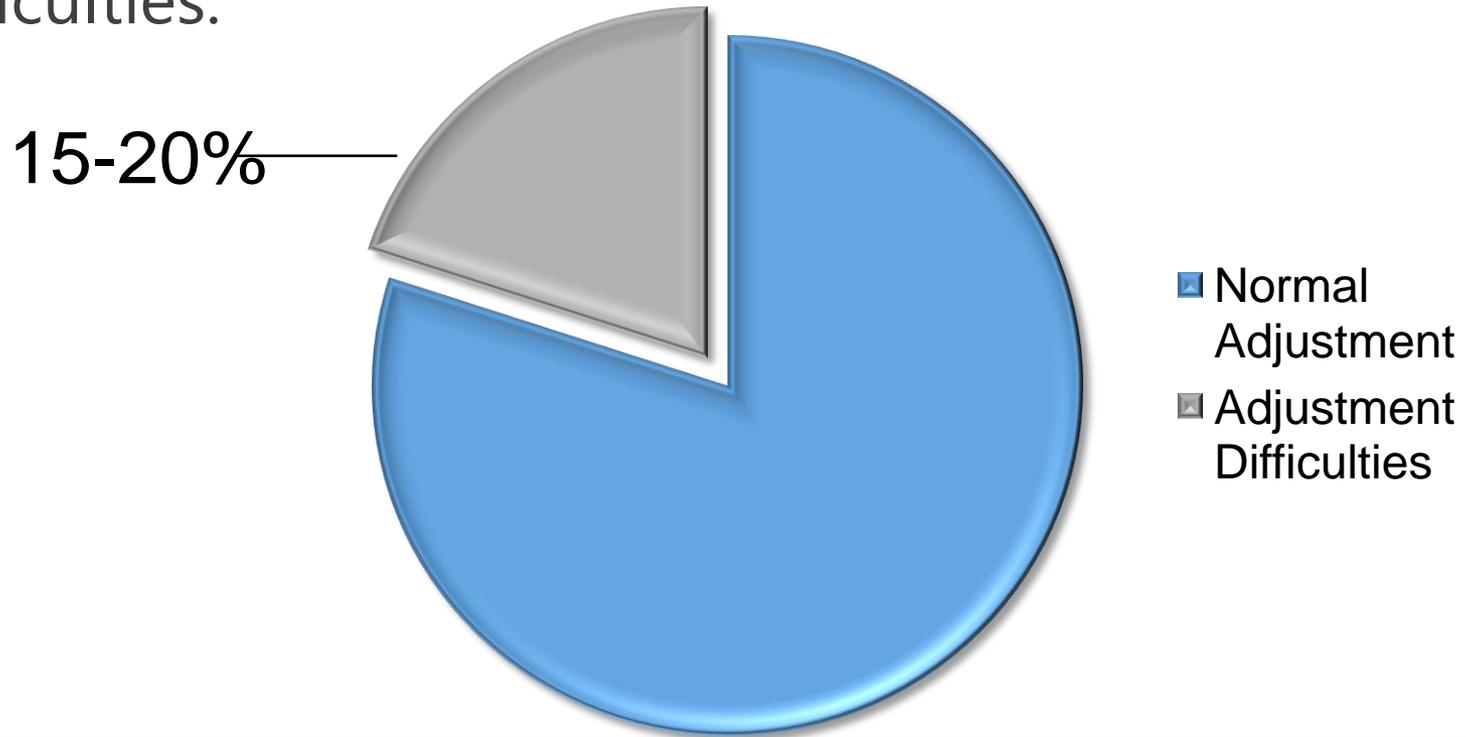
Death of peer

- Almost 40% of children will experience the death of a peer

Basic Considerations

Bereavement among school children

Most children will display a normal adjustment to death; however, some may experience significant difficulties.



Basic Considerations

Schools as Optimal Settings to Provide Services

- Provide a familiar environment
- Can facilitate large number of students
- Early and ongoing intervention
- Allow for ongoing monitoring of students

Need for Education and Training

- School personnel often unprepared to assist grieving students
- It is important to provide support to the faculty first

Basic Considerations

Developing a mature concept of death:



Irreversibility	Non functionality	Universality
Once a living things dies, it cannot become living again	All life functions end upon death	All living things die; it is an inevitable aspect of life

Basic Considerations

Understanding the Grieving Process



Basic Considerations

Understanding the Grieving Process

- Variability in onset of grief among children
- Grief may erupt in brief, intense episodes, with a sudden return to normal
- Students may appear to be doing well, but may show later difficulties
- Each student has their own unique history of traumatic events and losses

What Reactions Can Be Expected From Students

Educating Staff and Parents on Grief Reactions

- Important for adults to model hope and coping
- Reach out do not preach
- Continue routines
- Keep schools open
- Parent meeting may be necessary
- Provide activities to express emotions
- Students will want to reach out to the family of deceased
- “Gift of hope” as students may want to start prevention programs
- Provide staff and parents handouts that outline the typical reactions that children have to trauma:
 - Nightmares/Worry/Sleeping Problems
 - Regression academically
 - Regression behaviorally

Assessing Impact

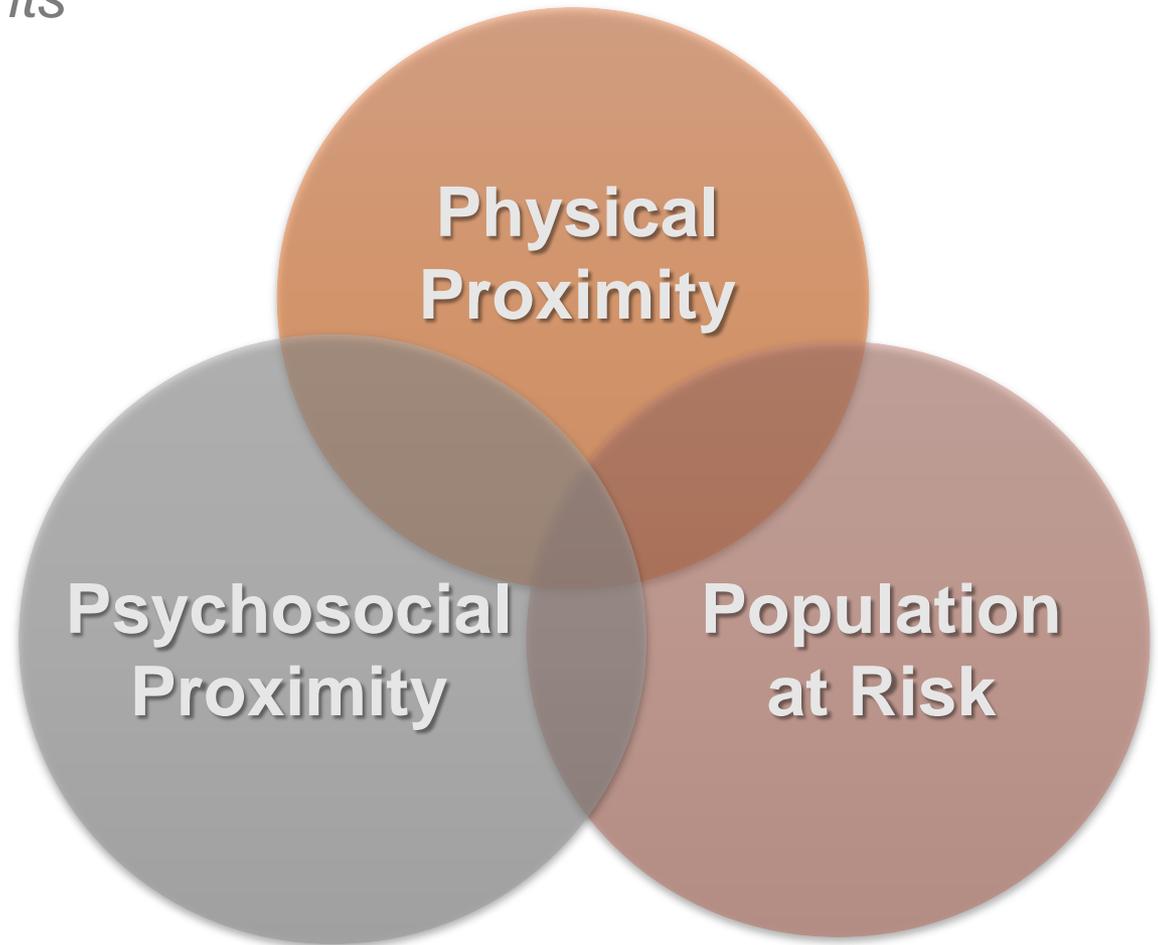
Degree and Range of Impact

- Status of the deceased/longevity at school
- Other family members attending same school
- Cause and manner of death
- Was there a perpetrator?
- Location of death
- Previous tragedies that have impacted the school

Assessing Impact

Identifying At-Risk Students

Circles of Vulnerability



Assessing Impact

Identifying Signs of Distress

Symptoms Associated with Complicated Grief

Intense focus on the death

Difficulty accepting the reality of the death

Preoccupation with how the deceased died

Intense longing for the deceased

Persistent personality changes

Extreme irritability or agitation

Pervasive fantasies of the deceased's return

Excessive or inappropriate guilt

Extreme withdrawal and detachment

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Components of an Effective Response to Death

- Well-planned and organized
- Seeks to minimize adverse effects for those affected
- Consistent with key components of a comprehensive crisis response plan
- Response to a death should be guided by several broad goals:
 - Supporting those affected by the loss
 - Restoring psychological equilibrium/safety as soon as possible
 - Identify those at risk for adverse reaction
 - Refer to outside agencies those in need of a deeper level of support

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Emotional First-Aid

Reaching out Physically	Reaching out Emotionally
Position yourself at the person's side, at their level	Use brief comments: "This must be very painful for you" "You are not alone. We are here for you." "I'm sorry this happened. I am here to listen."
Use the individual's name, using a soft voice	Use brief suggestions: "It's okay to let your feelings out."
Provide a comforting physical presence through the use of body language	Use brief questions: "How are you feeling?" "How can I help?"

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Memorials & Other Rituals

- Provide opportunities for memorial activities or allow for a temporary memorial site
- Memorial activities should be based on needs and wishes of the school community
- Develop policies for memorials in advance

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Preparing for the Return of a Grieving Student

Contact the student and their family to determine how the grieving student is coping with the loss

Discuss the topic of grief with students in the class

Highlight potential difficulties the returning student may experience

Prepare students for possible behavior changes in the returning student

Be attentive to potential grief reactions of classmates

Provide opportunities to reach out to the grieving student

Teach students to respect the grieving process

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Parent Support & Education

- Parental support is the most critical aspect of child's adjustment
 - Acknowledge what has happened
 - Listen empathically
 - Express genuine concern and provide support
 - Give reassurance without minimizing the loss
- Provide handouts to parents with basic information about the grieving process, how to talk to their child, & local resources

Taking Action: What Schools Can Do to Help

Special Considerations

- **Support for students with special needs**
 - May require additional support tailored to their unique needs in order to help them cope with death related loss
- **Self-care**
 - Caregivers cannot effectively care for others unless they also care for themselves
- **Suicide**
 - Friends, family, acquaintances, and even those who were not acquainted with the deceased may be at risk for a complicated grief response

What If the Death Was a Suicide?

Key Points

- Tell the truth about the manner of death but focus on the living and their reactions
- Contact the family of the victim
- Avoid glamorizing the victim
- Follow media guidelines for reporting suicide
- The answer as to “why” died with them
- Emphasize not all suicides can be prevented and mental illness and depression are often involved
- Focus on assistance to those affected and educate everyone on the warning signs and sources of help
- Identify those most at risk for imitative behavior
- Monitor social media
- Review and implement recommendations from, After a suicide: Toolkit for schools available at www.afsp.org
- Recognize that memorial activities are allowed and often necessary after a suicide death and that schools should strive to treat all deaths the same



Resilience

The ability to thrive and to show positive adaptation despite significant adversity or challenging circumstances.

Setting the Stage for Resilience

Strategies for Promoting Resilience

Help students identify supportive adults in their lives

Help students make connections with peers

Create positive classroom connections

Empower students by encouraging them to help others

Help students increase a sense of competence by setting realistic goals

Encourage proper self-care

Help nurture a positive self-view

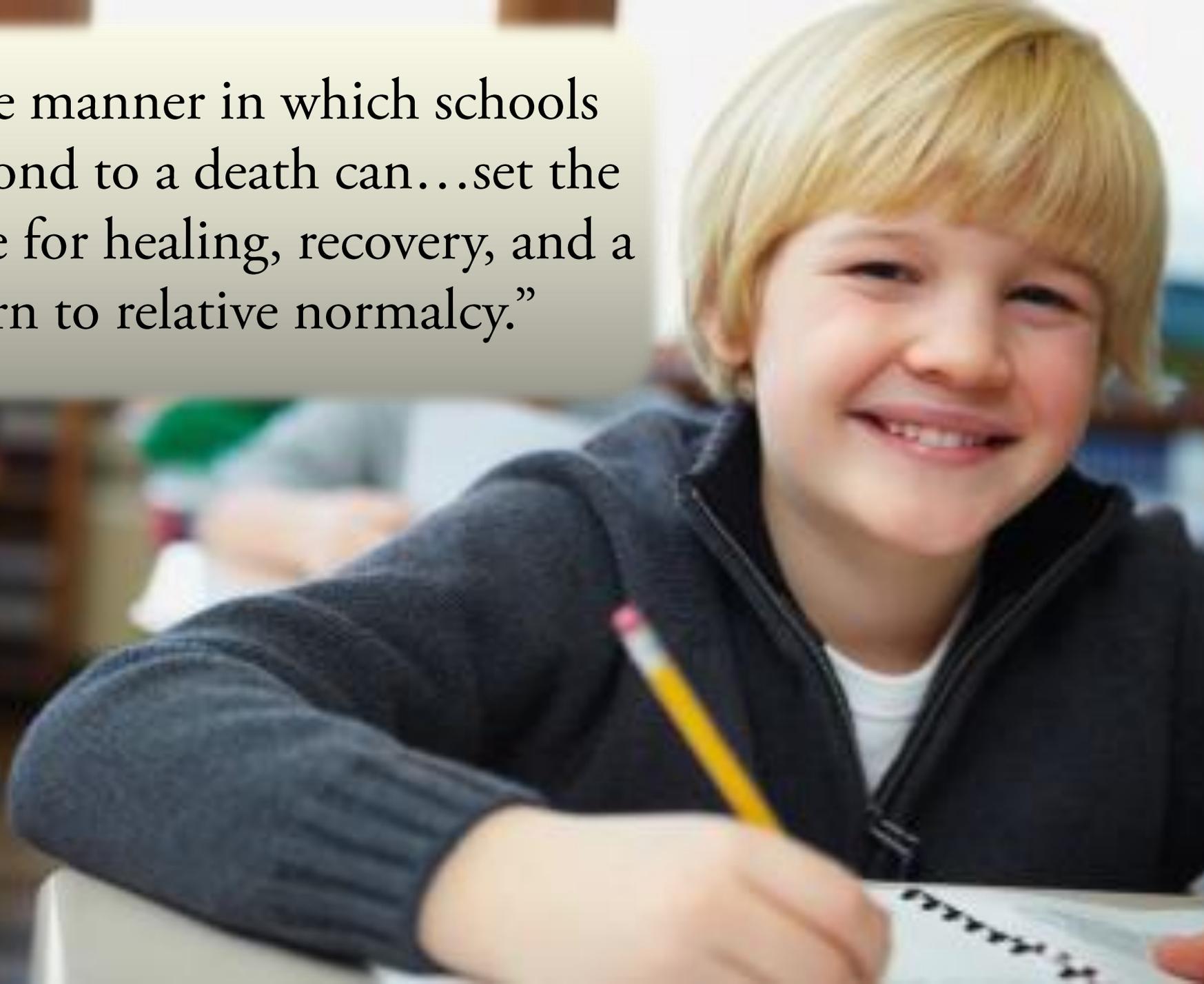
Teach the importance of maintaining a daily routine

Encourage students to maintain a positive outlook

Long-Term Followup

- Maintain ongoing monitoring of affected students and staff
 - Continued communication to monitor academic progress, social relationships, and overall adjustment
 - Identify those in need of additional support or services
- Resurfacing of grief reactions may occur during momentous occasions, such as:
 - Graduation
 - Anniversary of the death
 - Another death in the school community

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



Resources

- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Resource Center**

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools.

www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf

- **Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families**

<http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/death-impacts-your-school/>

Provides publications and information for grieving children and families and also provides training and technical assistance to establish peer support groups for grieving children, teens, and their families.

Resources

- **National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement:**

<http://www.stchristophershospital.com/pediatric-specialties-programs/specialties/690>

Serves as a resource center for information, training materials, consultation, and technical assistance for school systems and other professional organizations in order to assist schools in supporting students, staff, and families during times of crisis and loss.

- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/traumatic-grief

Provides information for parents and caregivers, educators, and other professionals on topics such as the grieving process, childhood traumatic grief, and sibling death.

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The Android phone screen shows the SchoolMessenger app interface with the following elements: a red flag icon for 'Job Types: Emergency', a phone icon for 'Lists: All District', an envelope icon for 'Message: Phone, Email', a gear icon for 'Options', a text input field containing 'Snow Day', and a 'Send Message' button at the bottom.

Get SchoolMessenger for iPhone now >



Available on the iPhone **App Store**



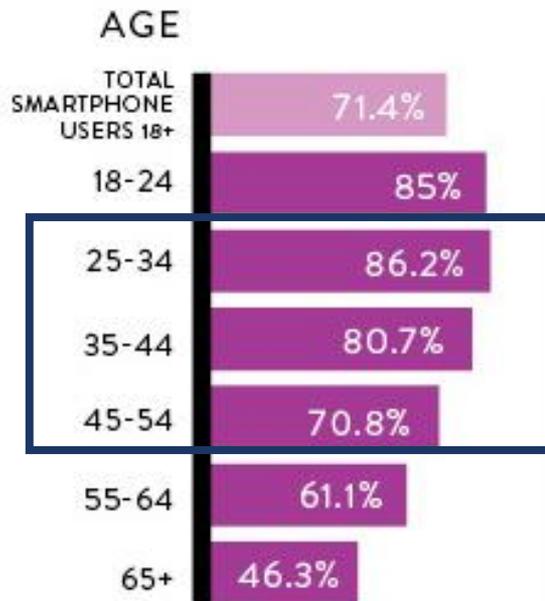
The iPhone screen shows the SchoolMessenger app interface with the following elements: a 'Login' button, a 'Main Menu' header, the SchoolMessenger logo, a 'Create and Send' button, a 'Send a Saved Message' button with a right arrow, and a 'View Reports' button with a right arrow.



The **Trusted Platform** for School
Community Engagement

Parents are mobile

In **2014**, **71%** of adults in the U.S. owned a smartphone.



SOURCE: Nielsen 2014

Custom Mobile App

88%



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