

STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATORS FOLLOWING A COMMUNITY CRISIS EVENT

In any crisis situation, there are residual emotional effects that involve the entire school community. Often times, students experiencing chronic trauma and stress in their lives may be more deeply impacted by new stressors, such as today's events. If you are concerned about how a student may be reacting to a recent crisis event, please take note of the following ways to support the student and yourself.

Inform support staff & get help

Inform school administration and school counselors about your concerns regarding the student. If you feel a student could benefit from the help of a mental health professional, consult with your school counselors.

Answer a student's questions

Let the student know that you are available to talk about the event if he or she wants to. When talking to these children, accept their feelings (even anger), listen carefully, and remind them that it is normal to experience emotional and behavioral difficulties following a traumatic event. Do not force a student to talk about the event if he or she doesn't want to. This may be more harmful than helpful for the child.

Create a supportive school environment

Maintain normal school routines as much as possible. A student having difficulties after a traumatic event can feel that life is chaotic and out of his or her control. It's beneficial for the student to have a predictable class schedule and format. The student may also need extra reassurance and explanation if there is a change. Staff should look for opportunities to help classmates who are struggling with how best to help and understand a student experiencing trauma.

Modify teaching strategies

Balance normal school expectations with flexibility. You might avoid or postpone large tests or projects that require extensive energy and concentration for a while following the event. Use teaching strategies that promote concentration, retention, and recall and that increase a sense of predictability, control, and performance.

Self-care

Trauma can affect all school community members, not just our students. If you are experiencing residual stress or anxiety take care of yourself by eating well and exercising, engaging in fun activities, taking a break during the workday, finding time to self-reflect, allowing yourself to cry, and finding things to laugh about.

Additional support is also available through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - contact MHN EAP at www.members.mhn.com and register with the code "sia", or call (800) 227-1060.