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### Students

- Designate a place for any kind of cards, signs, etc. and establish a timeline for when those items will be taken down and/or given to the family
- Hear facts/script
- Understand requirements for attending funeral
- Assessing individual students for risk – not counseling, if assessment indicates risk then refer for counseling
- Defusing
- Debriefing

### Parents

- Use school website and email to distribute information and resources
- Inform what is being done with students
- Letters home
- Inform of importance of routine and attending school

### Community

- Community meeting – CMB
- Fact sheet/script
  - School Representative
  - Law Enforcement
- Crisis Team Representative
- Mental Health Professional – Grief speaker
- Stick around for questions

### Administration

- Team leader needs to keep communication open with administration
- Share with them what we can do
- We are available for staff
- Call in Subs
- Checklist
- Ask what do they want from us?
- Do they have a website we can use to get information out?
- Develop a script to distribute the information
- Who will be liaison with Family, Media, Law Enforcement, Ministerial
- Give the superintendent the evaluation form

### School Crisis Response Team/School Counseling Team

- Educate team how this will work for this event
- Referral forms
- Team Roles – Who is doing what?
  - SCRT people
  - School personnel
- Create a safe place for kids
  - Have resources available
- Create a command central place. It should NOT be the same as the safe place for kids. It needs to be confidential and generally accessed only by the team, administration and mental health professionals of the district
- Create a script to distribute information to staff and students

### Staff

- Get the staff the information/facts and a script to use
- Let them know where safe room for them is and how they can access that room
- Let them know what we will be doing
- Provide resources in safe room and lounge
- Provide debriefing as needed
- Assign counselor or SCRT member to talk to certain groups of students
- Encourage to maintain as normal routine as possible

When called for an intervention, the CISM team has a few options of what type of conference they will lead. The determining factors are mainly the number of participants in the intervention and how much time has transpired since the critical stress event. When choosing which type of intervention to use the CISM team should abide by the following guidelines:

### Debriefing

- takes place no more than 24-72 after the critical incident
- usually are one to three hours in duration
- involves 2-25 participants
- information is drawn out from participants thru interactive dialogue
- follows the seven-step Mitchell model

### Defusing

- takes place less than 12 hours after the critical incident
- usually is around one hour in duration
- involves 2-25 participants
- information is drawn out from participants thru interactive dialogue
- follows an abbreviated seven-step Mitchell model

### Demobilization

- takes place before participants leave scene of critical incident
- usually lasts about 20 minutes
- involves 2-100's of participants
- information is given to the participants through a one-way announcement and education presentation
- information is limited to what is known and being done currently pertaining to critical incident

### CMB

- takes place before participants leave scene and/or up to a week after critical incident
- usually lasts between 20-45 minutes
- involves 2-100's of participants in a "town hall" style meeting
- information is given to participants via a prepared statement from agency affected
- Q&A session is focused on reactions to event; discloses to CISM team target needs for group

Realize that these are mere guidelines, not concrete rules. It is very common to plan all steps and aspects of an intervention and to be "thrown a curve" during the session by the participants or environment.

The **CMB** follows a four-step process that is familiar steps to CISM team members: assemble/ground rules, fact phase (information from agency affected), education phase, and resources/re-entry phase. Following the four steps the CISM team conducts a Q&A session to further educate, inform and discuss the critical incident. Though the steps are familiar, conducting a CMB requires much more

involved interactions and evaluations by CISM-trained team members. Team members must accurately assess the group of participants at all stages of the intervention, being aware of any participants who may potentially need further care.

### **Pre-Intervention Meeting**

Before a CMB it is most critical to arrive early to the meeting site to make introductions, assign positions, and get a briefing on the incident. An ideal ratio of participants to CISM team members is four or five to each team member. This is crucial to the success of the intervention in many ways: it conveys an air of confidence to the people needing aid, it lines up beforehand the assignment of duties and positions, and gives CISM team members a chance to associate to get a impression of what is the nature of the problem. Assign a lead, signs & symptoms and education positions, and a “rabbit chaser” (for folks who leave mid-intervention). Acquaint the team with the agency representative who will be giving the fact statement. Go over the statement to bring up any questions that can be answered ahead of time. It is advantageous to make sure that the agency representative is a person whose personality is neither too shy nor too authoritative. While interacting with the participants (“peer up”) as they arrive, CISM team members should be asking appropriate questions (“How do you think the group is holding up?” “Is it too soon or too hard to speak about the incident?”). The better prepared the team is to defining and recognizing the problems, the better the participant’s return to pre-incident condition will be.

### **Assembly/Ground Rules**

Make sure that there are enough space for all the participants. Go over the ground rules (CISM process, out of service, no phones/pagers, confidentiality, volunteer participation, not a procedural critique), identify team members, and if possible have participants introduce themselves (only if less than 20 people).

### **Facts Phase**

This is an important step, as stated above, that is crucial to the CMB. The person giving the facts about the incident needs to be a representative of that agency involved. This person needs to be able to dispense the facts without elaboration or opinion, and with enough authority as to be respected. It is also important to interview this representative so that you can prevent them from disclosing too much, or non-important facts about the event in their informational statement. This is NOT a press release—there is information given that this group will be privy to. Be aware of management vs. labor dynamics. Participants should be told that questions would be addressed after the facts are given, but only generalities about the incident as the facts are known, or questions about the CISM process. This may cause undo emotional rise if particulars are brought up.

### **Education Phase**

Signs and symptoms of stress, cause and effects of prolonged exposure and impacts should be explained to the participants. Unlike the discovery phase in the conventional debriefing, participants should not be asked to compare pre-incident condition to post-incident state. Participants should be encouraged to realize that their reactions are a “normal response by a normal person to an abnormal event” (standard CISM methodology and vocabulary) and that the team is available for peer intervention and also can provide information about the Employee Assistance Programs available. Education and handouts explaining the re-entry phase should be conveyed by CISM team members well versed in recovery techniques. This may be a good role for any mental health professionals on the team.

### **Question & Answer Forum**

The floor is open to questions about the event (to be answered by the agency representative if it is a factual question), and questions as to how to deal with the stressors and affects of the event itself. The team should maintain an educational focus in their replies. After this time, team members should be available for one-on-one informal interventions, talking with participants about the event, stress management etc. This time is key to the Crisis Management Briefing, as it gives the participants ample time to voice concerns that were not answered during the main session.

### **Key Issues with the CMB**

- Pre-assign positions (education, gatekeeper, leader, etc.)
- Identify any mental health professionals attending
- If answers to pre-meeting questions are leading to the event being too close to the briefing or it is too hard to verbalize anything about the event, go straight to the signs and symptoms/ education phase.
- Remember to conduct a post-briefing meeting with the team to verbalize any observations and improvements concerning the briefing.

## Staff Crisis Management Briefing

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**Invite** – All staff members: teachers, custodian, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, para's/aids, office staff, etc.

Arrange for speakers, administration, mental health, outside agencies if applicable i.e. law enforcement.

**Administrator** - Deliver a statement of facts without elaboration or opinion, facts on the situation as appropriate within the bounds of confidentiality.

**Counselor/ Social Worker** - Introduction of SCRT members, Ministerial and any other outside entities and how they will be recognized (name badges). They are here to support us during this time. What will happen first hour and the rest of the day.

We have created a script for you to read first hour, if you would rather not read the script to your students let us know and we will come in and do it for you.

Prime concern is identifying students (and staff) who may be struggling with this tragedy, Close friends, enemies or individuals who may be re-working grief from a prior loss. Those with mental health concerns etc. We have created a worry list, and will be checking in with those individuals. You are our eyes and ears, you know your students, if you have a worry please contact \_\_\_\_\_

**SCRT Member** - Students reactions to the tragedy may include regression, confusion, forgetfulness, stomach upsets, emotional outburst, and isolation. We all grieve differently. It is ok to laugh, it is ok to cry, or be angry. Dealing with a loss such as this can truly be a rollercoaster ride.

We have created a "safe room" in room \_\_\_\_\_. If a student is unable to remain in class, they can be excused to go to the safe room. If they are upset, please do not send them alone.

Staff may need extra support during this time so you can deal with your own reactions. We have some comfort food in the staff lounge, along with some resources for you on typical reactions to a tragedy. (How to talk to students about grief and loss etc.) We will be checking in on staff throughout the day.

**Counselor/ Social worker** - We have put out tag board in the \_\_\_\_\_ area for students and staff to write well wishes to the family. This will remain there until \_\_\_\_\_ when it will be taken down and given to the family.

Remember its ok to cry in front of your students. Students need to see healthy modeling of grief.

**Administrator** - We also have subs available today, so if you need to excuse yourself please let \_\_\_\_\_ know and we will get a sub to take over your class.

We will have a short meeting after school today.

Are there any questions for any of us?

Hand out scripts and make other applicable resources available.

## Student Notification Following the Death of a Student

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Dear Students,

I have asked your teacher to read this letter to you because I want to make sure all students receive the same information about the recent tragedy at our school. It gives me great sorrow to inform you that (NAME), a student at (SCHOOL NAME), died on (DAY/DATE). (INSERT WHAT CONFIRMED INFORMATION CAN BE SHARED ABOUT THE CAUSE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH.)

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. Many of us may be confronted with a variety of emotions which might include shock, sadness, and confusion. I want to assure you that our school staff care about you and the feelings you may be experiencing.

Today you will notice a lot of people in the building. The SWWC School Crisis Response Team will be available throughout the next couple of days and can be identified by their name badge. Students can meet individually or in a small group. If students need to speak with someone, they should report to the (PLACE). If you recognize another student who might need a check in, please talk to your teacher.

I know this might be hard for some of you, especially when you see the (STUDENT NAME) empty desk. Some students may not have known (STUDENT NAME) very well, but that doesn't mean that they won't be mourning. When people die, it affects people in different ways - and maybe someone who recently lost their Grandma or another family member will find this tragedy brings up those emotions. Please support one another during this difficult time.

Any time death touches us, it is stressful. This sudden death may be quite shocking to you and confuse you. For these reasons, we especially want you to know of our care and support.

Sincerely,

### **IF DEATH BY SUICIDE, THIS LANGUAGE CAN BE INCLUDED:**

It is with great sadness that we report the death of (STUDENT) who died this weekend from an apparent suicide. Our sympathy goes out to the family and those close to (STUDENT) and understand that this situation may generate strong feelings.

The death of any member of our school is tragic. When this death is a result of a suicide, there may be many unanswered questions and intense feelings. Suicide is never the best way to deal with problems or illness. Please be aware of the resources and education that is available to deal with suicidal feelings or if you are concerned about another.



**SAMPLE LETTER TO STUDENTS  
FOLLOWING A DEATH**

(DATE)

Dear Students,

I have asked your teacher to read this letter to you because I want to make sure that all students receive the same information about the recent tragedy at our school. It gives me great sorrow to inform you that ((NAME), a (teacher student/friend) at (SCHOOL NAME), has died (DAY/DATE). *(Insert what confirmed information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death.)*

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden, Many of us may be confronted with a variety of emotions which might include shock, sadness, and confusion. I want to assure you that we, the (SCHOOL NAME) staff, care about you and the feelings you may be experiencing.

Please know that we want to support you during this time. The Tragedy Response Team will be available to meet with you in (PLACE) to assist you in dealing with any feeling you may be having.

You might wish to share memories you have of (NAME). Tragedy Response Team members will also be available at any time during the day to help you if you feel a more urgent need to talk with someone. *(Insert here specific information on how students can access support service staff and collaborating agencies for support.)* I want to encourage those students who may be particularly upset, perhaps even struggling with a death in the family or of a friend, to talk with Tragedy Response Team members. They will be available to meet with you.

Any time death touches us, it is stressful. This sudden death may be quite shocking to you and confuse you. For these reasons, we especially want you to know of our care and support.

Sincerely,

(PRINCIPAL'S NAME)

## Statement shared with Jr. High/Sr. High Students:

As many of you are aware, the \_\_\_\_\_ community experienced the death of our \_\_\_\_\_ teacher, \_\_\_\_\_. We are extremely saddened by this event.

Today you will notice a lot of people in the building. Counselors and clergy will be available throughout the next couple of days and will be identified by a name badge. Students can meet individually or in a small group. If students need to speak with someone they should report to \_\_\_\_\_ office, where they will sign in.

I know this might be hard for some of you today, please remember there are people who are here to support you through all of this. Please let an adult know if you need someone to talk to.

We have set up a memorial table and poster paper by the \_\_\_\_\_ room to leave statements of comfort or fond memories of \_\_\_\_\_. We will be giving these memories and words of support to the \_\_\_\_\_ family for the visitation and funeral.

There will be purple ribbons available to wear for all students in remembrance of \_\_\_\_\_. Staff and students are welcome to pick them up in the \_\_\_\_\_ room.

Some of your classmates may have spent less time with \_\_\_\_\_ than others, but that doesn't mean that they don't have the right to mourn the loss. When people die it affects all of us in different ways. You really need to show a lot of respect for each other. It is important to know that we all grieve differently, it is ok to cry and it is ok to laugh.

## Staff Talking Points to share with Students:

As many of you are aware, [REDACTED] became unconscious two times over the course of the day.

[REDACTED] Unfortunately were unsuccessful. We are extremely saddened by this event.

Today you will notice a lot of people in the building. Counselors and clergy will be available throughout the next couple of days and will be identified by a counselor or clergy name badge. Students can meet individually or in a small group. If students need to speak with someone they should report to the Multipurpose Room, where you will sign in. Staff should email [REDACTED] if students leave their room for grief purposes. If you recognize a student who might need a check in, please email [REDACTED] with your concern.

I know this might be hard for some of you today, especially when you see the empty desk, please remember all of the people who are here to support you through all of this. Please let an adult know if you need someone to talk to. If an uncomfortable situation should arise in your classroom, please contact [REDACTED] so she can send someone to cover for you or to comfort that student.

We have set up a memorial table and poster paper across from the [REDACTED] and South Computer [REDACTED]; to leave statements of comfort or fond memories of [REDACTED]. We will be giving these memories and words of support to the [REDACTED] family for the visitation and funeral.

There will be gold ribbons available to wear for all students in remembrance of [REDACTED]. Staff and students are welcome to pick them up on his memorial table across from the [REDACTED].

Some of your classmates may not have known [REDACTED] as well as others but that doesn't mean that they don't have the right to mourn the loss. When people die it affects all of us in different ways. Maybe someone recently lost their Grandma and this brings up those emotions. You really need to show a lot of respect for each other. What are some ways that you have shown respect for one another during this grief process?

It is important to know that we all grieve differently, it is ok to cry and it is ok to laugh.

## For Teachers Only: Do not share with students.

- We have staff resources that you will be getting today.
- If any media contacts you, you need to direct them to [REDACTED]. Do not speak with them about the situation.
- Please remember that you need to keep the school routine as normal as possible, however, you may need alter your lesson plans as you see fit.
- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will be here as roaming subs. If you need to leave the room with at student, please contact [REDACTED].

Teaching Staff:

**Notes:**

Be attentive to the students and to each other, be in the halls, meet the kids at your doors. Routine is important but it is also important to allow time to grieve. It is a balance act.

The talking points/ discussion starters are ideas; you are not required to discuss them at all.

Allow students a chance to talk about their reactions; answer questions as honestly as you can.

Students unable to maintain composure should be given a pass to the safe room

Encourage students to be aware of each other and walk a classmate to an adult if they need help, or contact an adult.

Encourage students to talk to their parents about their reactions

**Class room script**

*A very sad thing happened that I want to share with you. We received word from the \_\_\_\_\_ family that \_\_\_\_\_ was pronounced dead this morning. \_\_\_\_\_ wishes were to be an organ donor. The \_\_\_\_\_ family is honoring that wish and will be making those arrangements today. We are all profoundly saddened by this.*

*You will notice some different people in the building today. We have members of the Ministerial Association that have volunteered to help us during this time along with some area counselors. We have set up support services in Coach Kockelman's office (old sign Language room, across from the counseling office). If you need to speak to a counselor or need to leave class this area will be available for you.*

**Talking Points**

It is important to know that we all grieve differently; it's ok to cry and it's ok to laugh.

What are some symptoms of grief?

Some of you may not have known \_\_\_\_\_ as well as others but that doesn't mean that they don't have the right to mourn the loss. When people die it affects us all in different ways. Maybe I recently lost my Grandma and this brings up those emotions. You really need to show a lot of respect for each other. What are some ways that you can show respect for one another during this time?

**Discussion Starters**

If you have a friend you are concerned about, what can you do?

What are things you can do when you're sad, lonely, stressed, angry...

Doing regular routine is important right now. So we will try our best to do what we usually do. And if you have struggles with that, what can you do?

## Parent Letter Following the Death of a Student

---

Dear Parents,

I am sorry to inform you that a staff person/student/friend, (NAME), at (SCHOOL NAME) died on {DAY/DATE}. (Insert what information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death.)

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students (in the classroom/school) so that they know what has happened. The SWWC School Response Team, along with our school counselors, have made plans to respond to the emotional needs of the students. (Spell out what is being done: grief counseling, classroom debriefing, referrals to support service staff and community based organizations)

As parents, you may want to talk to your children too. The death of a student may affect a child in a variety of ways depending on the age of a child, how well the child knew (the one who died) and the child's prior experience with grief. If your family has experienced a death or similar loss recently, the death of (NAME) may bring up feelings about that death, which is normal. Please let your child's teacher know if there is any additional information we should be aware of so we can provide the support your child needs.

When reacting to death, a child may:

- be afraid that they or a family member may die too
- try extra hard to be good
- ask a lot of questions
- appear numb or not to be affected
- wish it would all go away
- be agitated and angry
- feel abandoned
- be frightened
- want to be close to parents
- experience sleep problems
- be sad and withdrawn

Although the work of grief takes as long as it takes, if increased anxiety, behavior challenges or sleep disturbances continue for more than a few weeks, it may be time to ask for professional advice from a family doctor, a minister or a mental health professional.

We would like to offer our support too as we know this is a difficult time for all. Please feel free to reach out to us or your child's teacher so that we may help with connecting families to resources, offering our support at school and bridging the communication from home to school.

Sincerely,

## SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS – FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear Parents:

Our school has been profoundly affected by the death of (name of student/teacher). We would like to offer you, at this time, some additional material that might help you respond to your children at home as they are struggling to understand and recover from this loss in their lives.

Enclosed are some handouts and a list of books that you can read, read with your children or get for them to read.

Please call the school counselor or Student Assistance Program Coordinator (name and phone number), for further assistance. We will be most interested to talk with you regarding any questions or concerns.

We recognize that this is a difficult time for our school families. We want to be available to support you.

Sincerely,

Dear parents-

In response to the recent incident involving the Jr/Sr High School, the counseling staff would like to offer the following suggestions for helping cope with this situation. Hopefully you will find these coping suggestions helpful.

Talking to your child:

- Focus on **facts** and **ONLY** what is known to be certain, **not rumors**
- Keep your child's day-to-day schedule as normal as possible
- Ask open-ended questions and let your child do the talking. Open ended questions are questions that cannot be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No". They typically start with *what* or *how* and encourage full statements and a deeper level of meaning. Try to stay away from asking *why*.

*Samples of open-ended question starters:*

- Please tell me ...
  - Tell me about ...
  - How is \_\_\_\_\_ affecting you?
  - How are you feeling about all of this?
  - How comfortable are you about ...
  - What can I do ...
  - How can I help?
- If your child has been friends with the student be aware that they may be going through the grieving process and working through trying to figure out what has happened. **The most important thing to remember and to let them know is that, by being friends with the student they are not at fault, nor should they feel guilty or ashamed.**

You may see symptoms of the 5 stages of the grieving process:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

What to watch for:

- Watch for behavior changes in upcoming weeks. These may include but are not limited to:
  - A downward-change in school performance
  - Poor concentration
  - Responding to situations in inappropriate ways
  - Sleep difficulties
  - Unusual occurrences of stomachaches, headaches, etc.
- While some changes are normal, if they seem particularly out of character please consider pursuing it further with professional help. Your family may want some help as well. Professional help consists of school counselors, ministers/members of the clergy, therapists, and community mental health centers.

Security concerns:

- School and city authorities have assured us that every step is being taken to make our buildings as secure and safe as possible. Authorities have told us they believe the immediate threat of danger has passed.

**If we can be of assistance please feel free to contact the counseling staff at any school**

**Stephanie Huischer, Hartley and WIS**

**Christine Weeks or Jim Helms, Jr High and High School**

### Guidelines for Parent Letter

- Maintain confidentiality, only release information that is public.
- Keep in mind wishes of the family and nature of the crisis
- Use a credible source such as the principal
- Site facts and source of those facts (i.e.... police, family)
- Include statement of condolence
- State district plan to support staff and students
- Confer with law enforcement (if involved) regarding facts released
- Tips for parents and resources for help
- Provide funeral/memorial service information when available

### SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Dear Parents:

A very sad thing happened today that I want to share with you.

(Share factual information)

*i.e. This morning one of our kindergarten students, (Name) was hit by a car outside of his home in Southwest Sacramento. According to his family, he ran out into the street and was seriously injured. He died at the hospital. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.)*

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students (in the classroom/school) so that they know what has happened. Counselors, teachers and other support personnel have been, and will continue to be, available to students, teachers and parents on an ongoing basis. Please call the school, (number) if you want assistance.

As parents, you may want to talk to your children too. The death of a (student/teacher) may affect a child in a variety of ways depending on the age of a child, how well the child knew (the one who died) and the child's prior experience with grief.

When reacting to a death, a child may:

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ➤ Appear not to be affected | ➤ Be thinking about it privately |
| ➤ Ask a lot of questions    | ➤ Be frightened                  |
| ➤ Be agitated and angry     | ➤ Be sad and withdrawn           |
| ➤ Try extra hard to be good |                                  |

We suggest you listen to your children. If they seem to need to talk, answer their questions imply, honestly and possibly over and over again.

(Optional) A Parent Informational Night is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, we can talk further about how to help children in grief.

Our thoughts are with (family name).

Sincerely,



## Sample Letters

### FOLLOWING A SUICIDE

(DATE)

Dear School Community:

I am sorry to inform you that a staff person/student/friend, (NAME), at (SCHOOL NAME) has died (DAY/DATE). *(Before stating this is a death by suicide, be sure of the accuracy of the report, and if the family will allow this information to be shared. Only then insert the information regarding the cause and circumstances regarding the death.)*

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden, All of us will be feeling a variety of emotions: shock, sadness, even some confusion. What is most important is that we care for and support each other.

The Tragedy Response Team has made plans to respond to the emotional needs of the students. *(Spell out what is being done: grief counseling, classroom debriefing, referrals)*

If your family has experienced a death or similar loss recently, the death of (NAME) may bring up feelings about that death. This is a normal experience. Although rare, sometimes students may be so overwhelmed by the death of someone close to them, that they may express suicidal thoughts or actions. Please let your child's teacher or school social worker know if there is any additional information the school should be aware of so we can provide the support your child needs.

Any time death touches us, it is extremely stressful. This sudden death may be disturbing to you as well as to your child. It is for this reason that we especially, want you to know of our caring and support.

*Be sure to include appropriate resources for families. See section 1 for possibilities.*

Sincerely,

(PRINCIPAL'S NAME)

### Student Script

I have some very sad news to share with you. We received word this morning that \_\_\_\_\_ died  
( **When** ) at his home surrounded by his loved ones. We are extremely saddened by this. \_\_\_\_\_  
taught science here from August 2012 to May of 2020.

Death can be difficult for us to understand. We all have different emotions in response to death: shock, sadness, confusion, maybe even anger. For some of use it will bring up losses that we have suffered from the past.

Any time death touches us, it is stressful and sad. Please remember we are here to support you, Please let an adult know if you need someone to talk to. When people die it affects all of us in different ways. And we all grieve differently, Its ok to laugh and it's ok to cry. If you have a worry or concern for yourself or any of your peers, please talk to a trusted adult, we want to be available to support you.

### Call Tree Script

I am calling you to let you know that \_\_\_\_\_ died ( **When** ) at his home surrounded by his loved ones. We will be having a staff meeting tomorrow morning at 7:30 to discuss the process we will take in notifying our students and families.

### Parent letter

Canby public schools is profoundly saddened by the death of \_\_\_\_\_ from cancer.  
taught science here from August 2012 to May of 2020. We received word from his family, that he died  
( **When** ). At his home surrounded by his loved ones.

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it affects such a young family. All of us will be feeling a variety of emotions: shock, sadness, even some confusion. Some of us will be re-working past grief. What is most important is that we care for and support each other. If you have a worry or a concern for your child please let us know. We recognize that this is a difficult time for our school family. We want to be available to support you.

**INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for taking time to participate.

The aim of this session is to lessen the effect of detrimental stress stemming from this event. Our desire is to have all of you return to pre-incident functionality.

We would encourage all of those people involved in the event to contribute to the discussion, though it is not mandatory. You may provide a “piece” of the puzzle that someone has and that may help them. In turn, you may have a question about the event that someone may provide clarity about.

Studies show that when a person has been through a critical incident tend to have a better post-incident return to normalcy when allowed to talk and discuss the event in this structured format. Many times these sessions prevent a person from having to seek further mental health support.

Please keep these few GROUND RULES in mind:

- Anything shared should be considered confidential—we don’t share what was said outside this circle of participants (CISM Team or victims).
- Let all have the freedom to share their view, even if it is different from your own.
- This is not an analysis/critique/PIA of this event; please silence any electronics.

Our team will remain on site to answer questions, provide assistance to further meetings or care, and to lend support.

**EXPLORATION**

Now we would like to hear from you ... please give us your name, and if you would tell us your assignment/job/task while at the scene of the event.

Describe, if you would, your thoughts and memories that are prominent about the event. Include your senses—what you saw, heard, smelled and felt—as you recollect those moments when you realized the gravity of the event.

It is not mandatory that you share ... if you’d rather not please just say so.

**INFORMATION**

When a person is runs into this type of event it’s not unusual for them to experience intrusive thoughts and dreams, different moods, uncharacteristic emotions, loss of energy, and minor or delayed shock.

What you've shared are normal thoughts that normal people experience when exposed to an abnormal event.

We've shared some of our initial thoughts and reactions to this event—that is a good first step. Some other things that help is keeping to your daily routine, avoiding excessive alcohol and caffeine, eat healthy foods, get plenty of good rest, pass up situations that are stressful if possible, spend time around familiar and comforting people and things, and try to do a bit of light exercise even if you initially don't feel like it.

We've brought some more information for you to have and share with your loved ones at home. We will stay and answer questions after we dismiss.

# Defusing Notes

## DEFUSING NOTES from card & p. 128

Maximum time is 30 minutes

### INTRODUCTION

- Self/ Team members
- The purpose is to review what happened, what our reactions are, & provide some helpful information.
- Summarize event, then talk about possible effects because this is a traumatic event
- Everyone speaks only for self
- You have the right not to talk
- Importance of listening to others
- Non-judgmental place to tell what has happened to us
- Emphasis on confidentiality
- Our team may do more follow-up (Debriefing) at a later date
- We will be around at the end of the session

### EXPLORATION

-Your name, your job, what happened from your perspective? (Gives permission for each person to tell their story, what they saw & did during the incident/day.)

- How is this affecting you?  
(Leader gradually weaves the various perspectives into a shared narrative, including the participant's initial reactions. This is an important part as it disrupts the tendency to feel isolated in one's experience, and it provides a base line against which one's individual perceptions and reactions can be gauged.)

## INFORMATION

- Abnormal Event may create Natural Reactions. Intense feelings can be normalized. (e.g. "I'm hearing pretty much what I expected; the normal reactions of normal people to an abnormal situation)
- Don't fight stress
- Give it time. Grief process
- Diet. Eat well - proteins, fruits & vegs., Avoid carbs, caffeine & alcohol - can interrupt sleep
- Cover handout information Your Body's Possible Reactions to Stress & Crisis
- Work / rest / play
- Help is available
- Seek support / Help of others
- Maintain routine
- Available for Debriefings for groups of staff or students if recommended
- Final assurance
- Tie-up - be sure the basic details of the incident are clear, clarify any misconceptions, answer questions
- Point of action
- Confidentiality reminder

### INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is (your name). I am a crisis response team member (state team), and I'd like to introduce the other team members (do so). We were called out today by (contact person) to help you work through this crisis.

We appreciate the opportunity to be of assistance. We recognize this is a tough and difficult time and some of you may not want to be here ... that is fine, this is not a mandatory gathering. Do know that, however, your participation would be an encouragement to others, promote cohesiveness in this (working group), and support for the organization/department/company.

You each probably had a different perspective on the event and by sharing you may provide a "piece of the puzzle" that others may be wondering about.

I'd like to briefly explain what we are going to do and some GROUND RULES before we begin ...

- There is no rank (if applicable) in the discussion.
- Only individuals involved in the incident are to be included ... look around the ring—is there anybody that shouldn't be here?
- Please silence all phones, radios, electronic devices.
- We will take no breaks. If you need to leave, a member of our team will follow to make sure you are OK.
- Participation is voluntary, you do not need to share if you do not wish.
- One person at a time speaks.
- This is not a critique/investigation/PIA (post-incident analysis). Please keep your comments to your reactions from the event.
- Everything shared should be considered confidential. Our team is not going to share what has been said, we would ask that you not disclose anything to others outside this group.
- Explain the Debriefing process:
  - It provides an outlet for those involved to share their experiences and reactions to the event, express thoughts and concerns since the event, and what one can do to feel better and return to pre-incident functionality if troubled.

Be sure to let each tell their story and thoughts, even if they differ from your remembrances of the event.

### FACT

Can we begin by going around the circle and stating our names, and where we were at the onset of the event. What we'd like is to get a picture of what the event was and the details as they pertained to you.

In your recounting of the event, try to be as descriptive as you can accounting for things you saw, heard, smelled, felt, etc. This will help us all develop a sense of the scene.

## **THOUGHT**

As you realized what was going on, what were your thoughts?

When you first came off “operational auto-pilot” (act-react), what were your responses to what was going on or what had occurred?

Share any emotions you had during the event.

## **REACTION**

What has been the hardest part of this event for you?

Are there things about the event that you still have questions about?

If there is one thing you could change about the event, without changing the outcome of the event, what would that be?

Is there any positive thing you can pick out from this event? It’s okay if there isn’t ...

## **SYMPTOM**

Since the event, what are some of the thoughts, feelings, and reactions you have experienced?

Has anyone else had similar symptoms?

## **TEACHING**

What we’ve heard you share here, though unique to this event, is that you are experiencing normal reactions that a normal person would have to an abnormal event.

There are proven ways that you can help yourself to get through this crisis and help you feel better.

- Share information about keeping to a routine, staying away from excessive caffeine and alcohol and sugar, getting some light exercise, do those things that calm and bring relaxation to your life, etc.

## **RE-ENTRY**

We like to conclude by discussing one thing that you are going to do for yourself that will help you through this tough time.

With each one of your permission, we would like to just follow up with a phone call or visit to “touch base” within the next couple of days.

# Debrief Notes

## DEBRIEF NOTES

from card & pp.129-131

### INTRODUCTION

- Self/ Team Members
  - Explain purpose and process
- Provides an opportunity for you to discuss (the incident), your reactions, & how it's been affecting you, & to do this among your peers. We have \_\_\_ min. allotted today.
- Debriefing sessions are a helpful way to take a traumatic event and help you through it. (NOT for evaluating staff actions, procedures, policy, or responsibility.)
  - Processing things orally with each other will help you eat better, sleep better, & work better
  - Not a critique, only a discussion. Listening to each other is very important.
  - No notes will be taken, no recordings
  - Confidential
  - Seven Step Process we will walk you through
  - You may ask questions as you wish. Everyone has the right to pass on any questions you do not want to answer.
  - Speak only for yourself
  - We won't take any breaks during this time. Will anyone need to leave early?
  - Everyone belongs here
  - Pagers and cell phones off
  - We will be around at the end of the session
  - Emphasis on confidentiality
  - No one has rank during this session. Everyone is an equal peer

### FACTS

- Who you are. Introductions of name, and how you have a connection with \_\_\_
- What role did you play (before, during, or after crisis)?

### THOUGHTS

- What do you remember thinking when you realized the full extent of the incident?

### REACTIONS

- Identify the worst part (of the incident) for you.
- What feelings did you experience?
- Group can offer support

### SYMPTOMS

- How have you noticed it's had an effect on you?
- Emotional
  - Behavioral
  - Thinking
  - Physical, sleeping, eating, stress reactions (Leaders pay attention to who may need support)

### TEACHING

- You're experiencing natural reactions to an abnormal event (name the things you've heard them share about the symptoms above)
- Don't fight it. Your brain needs to run these events over & over, in order to find a way to sort it out and fit it in... in a way it can survive. Let your brain run the thoughts.
- Give it time. There is no time frame for grief or recovery from a traumatic event.
- Diet. Eat well - proteins, fruits & vegs., Avoid carbs, caffeine & alcohol - can interrupt sleep
- Work / rest / play - make time for all
- Be aware help is available
- Seek support / help of others
- Maintain routine
- Handout Your Body's Possible Reactions to Stress & Crisis

### RE-ENTRY

- Final assurance
- Tie up, answer questions
- Plan of action. Our team can help more groups of people if needed - Students/Staff
- Confidentiality reminder

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# Common Stress Reactions From Critical Incidents

“Critical Incident: Any situation faced by students or staff that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the ability to interfere with their ability to function or perform duties effectively. These are normal reactions that normal people have to abnormal events.”

### Physical Reactions

Gastro-intestinal discomfort	Fatigue	Rapid heart beat
Cramps	Headaches	Nausea
Breathing problems	Chills	Dizziness
Sweating	Increased illnesses	Chest pain
Impaired immune system	Shock	Tingling in limbs

### Emotional Reactions

Disturbed thought	Grief	Guilt
Denial	Fear	Panic
Depression	Apprehension	Anxiety
Powerlessness	Anger/rage	Survivor guilt
Sadness	Helplessness	Overly sensitive

### Cognitive Reactions

Lowered concentration	Orientation	Decision making
Memory	Hyper-alertness	Sleep problems
Nightmares	Intrusive images	Problem solving
Apathy	Preoccupation with trauma or event	
Perfectionism	Thoughts of self-harm or harm to others	

### Behavioral Reactions

Startle easy	Speech	Restlessness
Avoidance	Alcohol	Outbursts
Appetite changes	Withdrawal	Hygiene
Blaming	Irritability	Moody
Accident proneness	Nightmares	

### Spiritual Reactions

Questioning faith	Disassociation	Anger
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Be aware of any of the above signs & symptoms. Continue to talk to others involved in the tragedy about your reactions; it will aid you and others. The debriefing/-fusing is merely the initial step in the process, providing “emotional first aid”. If there is a need for further debriefing sessions, one-on-one peer meetings, or any other type of support needed, please let your administration know and the SCRT team will follow up with you.