

# School Social Work Newsletter

"In every crisis lies the  
seed of opportunity"  
*Chinese proverb*

"Nothing is impossible, the  
word itself says 'I'm possible'"  
*Audrey Hepburn*

"Sometimes the  
questions are  
complicated and the  
answers are simple"  
*Dr. Seuss*

"Believe you can and  
you're halfway there"  
*Theodore Roosevelt*

**Our fall newsletter has taken on a special focus to help us better prepare for the unforeseen events, no matter what it may bring, so that we can consider ourselves as agents of "peace and calm" in our ever changing world. With these thoughts in mind, we offer you the following.**

## **What is a crisis?**

A crisis can be described as a time of intense difficulty, where an individual's emotions are marked by a sense of danger and "trouble." It's a time when difficult decisions must be made and decisive action taken to ameliorate the crisis.

Children may experience a crisis at any age. Crisis is a dangerous time requiring serious attention to be given, especially by the adults in their lives. They turn to us for information, strategies, and for a sense of safety or security that tells them, "Everything will be alright!" They receive this information many ways. We need to be mindful that children receive information not only from what we say but in how we say it. They notice inconsistencies in our messages and respond to what they perceive. This may require us to monitor the expression of our own emotions in the presence of our children. Mostly, it requires us to be agents of "peace and calm" in the lives of our children.

## **HOW CHILDREN RESPOND TO CRISIS:**


Children and teens respond to crisis and loss in different ways. Depending on the nature of the event, some children may be more at-risk and vulnerable. The variables that may influence how an individual student responds after a crisis include their history of past losses or traumas, how close they were to those directly affected by the event, their developmental level, family differences, their mental health and their ability to cope in times of stress. It is helpful to respond to every child on a case by case basis taking their developmental level into account. Some of the differences based on developmental levels are noted below:

For children ages 3 – 5 you may observe decreased verbalization, increased fear of separation and some regression (such as having bathroom accidents.)

For children ages 5 – 12 you may notice increased irritability, withdrawal, problems with concentration, somatizing, sleep problems, change in appetite and a focus on talking about the crisis.

For children and teens ages 13 – 19 they may report nightmares, symptoms of depression, increased anxiety, and withdrawal. You may notice development of problems with peers, use of alcohol or other substances and a change in grades.

### Upcoming Events

  
**“Teen Truth” Drug and Alcohol Prevention Assembly for students and parents**

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**Red Ribbon Week  
 October 26-30, 2015**

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**Thanksgiving Food Drive**



**Holiday Toy Drive**

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**Ryan’s Story Bully Prevention Assembly**



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### TIPS FOR PARENTS:

Whenever a national tragedy occurs, such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters, children, like many people, may be confused or frightened. Most likely they will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children cope first and foremost by establishing a sense of safety and security. As more information becomes available, adults can continue to help children work through their emotions and perhaps even use the process as a learning experience.

1. Focus on your children over the week following the tragedy. Tell them you love them and everything will be okay. Try to help them understand what has happened, keeping in mind their developmental level.
2. Make time to talk with your children. Remember if you do not talk to your children about this incident someone else will. Take some time and determine what you wish to say.
3. Stay close to your children. Your physical presence will reassure them and give you the opportunity to monitor their reaction. Many children will want actual physical contact. Give plenty of hugs. Let them sit close to you, and make sure to take extra time at bedtime to cuddle and to reassure them that they are loved and safe.
4. Limit your child’s television viewing of these events. If they must watch, watch with them for a brief time; then turn the set off. Don’t sit mesmerized re-watching the same events over and over again.
5. Maintain a “normal” routine. To the extent possible stick to your family’s normal routine for dinner, homework, chores, bedtime, etc., **but don’t be inflexible**. Children may have a hard time concentrating on schoolwork or falling asleep at night.
6. Spend extra time reading or playing quiet games with your children before bed. These activities are calming, foster a sense of closeness and security, and reinforce a sense of normalcy. Spend more time tucking them in. Let them sleep with a light on if they ask for it.
7. Safeguard your children’s physical health. Stress can take a physical toll on children as well as adults. Make sure your children get appropriate sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
8. Consider praying or thinking hopeful thoughts for the victims and their families. It may be a good time to take your children to your place of worship, write a poem, or draw a picture to help your child express their feelings and feel that they are somehow supporting the victims and their families.

### Find out what resources your school has in place to help children cope:

Most schools are likely to be open and often are a good place for children to regain a sense of normalcy. Being with their friends and teachers can help. Schools should also have a plan for making counseling available to children and adults who need it.

*Modified from material posted on the NASP website in September 2001. For information on helping children and youth with a crisis, contact the school social workers or school psychologists.*