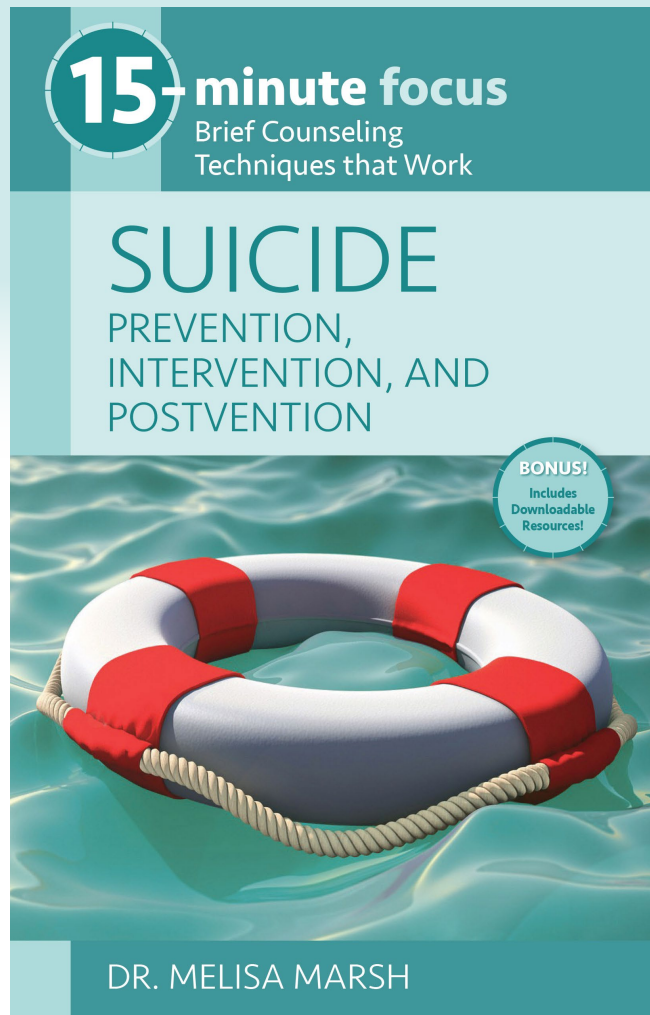


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15-Minute Focus
Suicide: Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention
Written by: Melisa Marsh
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Safety Plan

STUDENT NAME

AGE

SCHOOL

GRADE

PARENT/GUARDIAN OR EMERGENCY CONTACT

I have expressed thoughts or attempts to harm myself or others (noted below). People at my school are concerned and want to support me. I understand that I have a part in keeping myself safe.

- ☐ Harming Self – Ideation/Intent/Attempt
- ☐ Harming Others – Ideation/Intent/Attempt
- ☐ Other

I, _____, agree that I will not try to harm myself or others. If I think about harming myself or others, I will help myself in the following ways:

I will use these coping strategies:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If the coping skills are not successful, I will:

Get help from an adult immediately:

At school, I will go to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Outside school, I will:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If I am alone, I will:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- **Not consume alcohol or other drugs.**
- **Not hurt myself or others.**
- **Other:** _____

I know I can call 911 or a crisis hotline that is open twenty-four hours per day:

1. National Crisis Line – 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
2. Suicide Prevention Hotline – 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
3. Text line: TEXTHELLO 741741

If I do not follow this plan, I understand that the following could happen:

- My parents will be contacted again.
- I will be referred to an outside resource.
- I may need to visit a hospital or treatment center.
- Other: _____

The Safety Plan follow-up date is: _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE

DATE

PARENT SIGNATURE

DATE

SCHOOL PERSONNEL

DATE

I give permission for the identified Trusted Adults to have a copy of my Safety Plan.

Additional Notes: _____

Key Terms

HARM TO SELF:

- **Ideation** – Suicidal thoughts without a plan/means
- **Intent** – Suicidal thoughts with a plan/means
- **Attempt** – Has actively made a suicidal attempt

SELF-INJURY

- Any attempt to inflict pain on oneself

HARM TO OTHERS:

- **Ideation** – Thoughts to hurt others without a plan/means
- **Intent** – Thoughts to hurt others with a plan/means
- **Attempt** – Has actively made an attempt to hurt others

Conference Summary

I have been informed that my child has been referred for a free assessment due to thoughts, statements, or attempts to harm themself or others. I understand that I have a responsibility to keep my child safe and, to do so, I have been advised by school personnel to take the following steps:

- Provide supervision for my child at all times and safety-proof my home. (My child should not be left alone at this time or allowed to access weapons, drugs, or medications.)
- I have been provided with a list of emergency numbers where a mental health risk assessment can be conducted.
- I have been advised to sign a release of information form so that school staff and outside professionals may share information to benefit my child.
- If my child is being assessed for self-harm/suicide risk, bring documentation of assessment by a mental health provider upon student's return to school. (See below.)
- I understand that I may be contacted by the school within 24 to 48 hours for follow-up information.
- I will notify the identified school representative when my child returns to school:

- In case of emergency, I should:
 1. Call 911.
 2. Call a crisis hotline and/or take my child for an immediate assessment (refer to the list of emergency numbers).
 3. Take my child to a hospital emergency room.

PARENT SIGNATURE

CONTACT NUMBER

DATE

SCHOOL PERSONNEL SIGNATURE

CONTACT NUMBER

DATE

Parent is to return this document to the school by: _____

DATE

To Be Completed by the Assessment Center:

ASSESSMENT CENTER

DATE OF ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL EVALUATOR

PHONE NUMBER

Recommendations: (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inpatient Hospitalization | <input type="checkbox"/> Group Counseling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outpatient Hospitalization | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Counseling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Re-Entry Plan

STUDENT

DATE

SCHOOL

GRADE

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME(S)

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

During the Re-Entry Meeting:

- Encourage the parent to stay in contact with the school about the student's treatment and needs.
- Ask the parent if the student is currently under the care of a mental health professional.
- Review any medical documentation provided by the parent.
- If needed, help to coordinate makeup work and assignments.
- Obtain signed Release of Confidential Information if the parent has not already provided this document.
- Plan with the student and parent how to handle questions about his/her absence.
- Update the Student Safety Plan if needed.
- Get permission to share the Safety Plan with the appropriate staff.

After the Re-Entry Meeting:

- If a Release of Confidential Information is obtained, consult with treatment professionals about any special needs the student may have or concerns about returning to school.
- Communicate with the teacher(s) to convey relevant, non-confidential information, answer questions, and address how the student will make up work.
- Share the Student Safety Plan with appropriate teachers, support staff, and administrators.
- Include the consulting nurse in discussion of medical/medication information (if applicable).

Ongoing Follow-Up:

- Ask the staff to monitor and report any additional concerns to the counselor.
- The counselor should check in with the student and family as needed.
- If the student has a high level of ongoing need(s) upon re-entry, refer for other support services (RTI2, social worker, school psychologist, outside mental health resources).

Additional Notes: _____

CARE/Crisis Team Plan

The goal of the CARE/Crisis Team is to help students and staff impacted by an emergency/crisis cope and return to normal functioning in the school environment. Effective planning will enable schools to respond to the emotional needs created when an emergency/crisis occurs.

The objective is to help responders:

- Reduce pain, suffering, and inaccurate details
- Minimize disruption of daily routines at the school
- Facilitate emotional recovery of the school population through the appropriate delivery of services

The CARE Team will be comprised of the Local CARE Team (LCT) and the District Crisis Team (DCT) whose roles and responsibilities are described below:

Site Coordinator: Principal (or Designee)

- Contact Assistant Superintendent (if not immediately available, contact Chief School Leadership Officer)
- In collaboration with Assistant Superintendent, determine who will contact the Communications Office
- Communicate the school's emergency plan to the CARE/Crisis Team
- When an emergency/crisis occurs, meet with the District Crisis Response Coordinator and local CARE Team Coordinator to determine the facts and complete the Principal's Checklist and Assessment of Severity
- Communicate to parents regarding the emergency/crisis
- Communicate to teachers/staff regarding the emergency/crisis
- Communicate to students regarding the emergency/crisis (either directly or through teachers)
- Provide direction and give administrative support to the CARE/Crisis Team

School Resource Officer (SRO):

- Provide and maintain security of the building and safety for students as needed
- Secure additional community resources as needed

Local CARE Team Coordinator: Counselor at School (or Designee)

- Consult and plan with the District Crisis Response Coordinator as needed
- Work with the CARE/Crisis Team to establish a general plan and assign roles to members of the CARE/Crisis Team
- Meet with the Local CARE Team (LCT) at least once per semester to update and review your school's CARE response plan
- Designate CARE/Crisis rooms in the school for both student and staff support throughout the day. The student and staff CARE/Crisis rooms should be separate.
- Coordinate with the administrator to secure and provide written internal information for the CARE/Crisis Team (ex: script, facts, etc.)
- Provide a place for the personal belongings of the CARE/Crisis Team and plan for any needed meals
- Consult with the Principal or Designee throughout the crisis response process
- Attend the district training for the Local CARE Team Coordinator
- Facilitate support for students who need more intensive support (individual support, parent pick-up, etc.)

CARE Room Coordinator:

- Ensure that the CARE/Crisis Rooms are appropriately stocked (water, tissues, paper, pens, flip charts, crayons, construction paper, sign-in/sign-out, etc.)
- Monitor the use of the CARE/Crisis Rooms
- Communicate with the Local CARE Team Coordinator the need for additional staff

Additional CARE/Crisis Team Members (SRO, Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselor, Nurses, etc.):

- Provide student support (individual and/or group)
- Provide teacher/staff support (individual and/or group)
- Provide information on reactions to the emergency/crisis to key stakeholders
- Make appropriate community referrals

Emergency/Crisis Occurs

- Principal ensures that all students and staff are safe
- Principal completes the Principal's Checklist and Principal's Assessment of Severity



Principal contacts Assistant Superintendent

- If not immediately available, contact Chief School Leadership Officer



Principal and Assistant Superintendent determine what level of CARE/Crisis Team support (if any) is needed:

- Local CARE Team (LCT)
- District Crisis Team (DCT)



Principal and/or Assistant Superintendent contacts Crisis Response Coordinator to provide information regarding the situation and make request for assistance if needed



Local CARE Team activated at school District Crisis Team implemented if needed



Principal/Designee and CARE/Crisis Team debrief

- Summary provided to Assistant Superintendent

Principal's Checklist

- ☐ Complete Principal's Assessment of Severity.
- ☐ Gather and verify the facts by working through the campus officer or other appropriate personnel.
- ☐ ***Do not call the home. If contacted by the family, verify what the family would/would not like the school to share.
- ☐ Make determination of what level of CARE/Crisis Team intervention is needed: Local CARE Team or District Crisis Team.
- ☐ Notify Assistant Superintendent, Communications Office, and District Crisis Response Coordinator. If the Assistant Superintendent is not immediately available, contact the Chief School Leadership Officer.
- ☐ Communicate facts/plan with District Response Crisis Coordinator and Local CARE Team Coordinator (Counselor in school).
- ☐ Gather and communicate facts/plan with building staff (ex: telephone tree, staff meeting, individual contact, written).
- ☐ Communicate facts/plan with parents (ex: written, individual contact, school messenger, etc.).
- ☐ Communicate a formal statement to be read to students.
- ☐ Assign staff member to check all automated distribution lists to ensure no phone calls, mail, or notices are automatically sent to the student's or staff member's home.
- ☐ Stay in contact with the CARE Team Coordinator to ensure that everything is running smoothly.
- ☐ Conduct debriefing session with the CARE Team and/or teachers and staff.
- ☐ Communication should be approved by the Office of the Assistant Superintendent in collaboration with the Communications Office.

Principal's Assessment of Severity

1. What happened (verified with facts)?
2. Who was involved?
3. Did members of the school community witness (or cause) the incident?
4. Status of the victim? (Ex. in hospital, at home, or deceased)
5. How well-known are the people involved? (Ex. a staff member that all the students know or a student who just recently enrolled in the school.)
6. When and where did it occur?
7. Are there any family members in the school? If yes, who?
8. Are there family members of the victim(s) in any other schools? If yes, who and where?
9. Involvement of other agencies? (Ex. law enforcement, hospital, DFCS, etc.)
10. Are there other members of the school community who have a direct/indirect connection? (Ex. clubs, sports, etc.)
11. What are the cultural needs of the students, staff, and community?
12. When did staff and students hear news of the incident? Have they had time to process their emotions?
13. What other critical events, if any, have recently impacted the school?
14. Other critical information:

Based on the responses to the above questions, the following CARE/Crisis team response is needed (can be both)

☐ Local CARE Team

☐ District Crisis Team

When Grief Comes to School: Protocol for School Crisis Response

The School District has a trained District Crisis Team (DCT) available to schools in the event of a death of a student, staff, or other tragic occurrence where additional support is needed. The Crisis Response Coordinator under the Student Assistance Programs department manages this team. It is comprised of school counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, members of the coalition of treatment providers, and other support staff.

This team is available to assist schools when a moderate to large number of students/staff will likely be grieving or emotionally upset. If the number of upset or grieving students is expected to be small (though it will still be emotionally impactful for some individuals), it may be more appropriate and a better use of resources to utilize the local school resources (school counselor, social worker, psychologist) to manage the response to a grief and loss event.

The following examples can assist in determining whether to utilize the District Crisis Team (DCT) or Local CARE Team (LCT).

WILL LIKELY NEED DCT SUPPORT	LCT MAY HANDLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death of a current student• Death of a current staff member• Bus or car accident with injuries<ul style="list-style-type: none">– (student or staff witnessed or involved)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death of a former student• Death of a former staff member or staff who has been out on leave for an extended period of time• Death of immediate family member (of student or staff member)• Death of a newly enrolled student not well-known yet

Each situation is different. It is important to contact the Crisis Response Coordinator to triage the incident. It is preferable to err on the side of caution in order to ensure the support of students and staff. Please note that grief support should always be available whether through the DCT or LCT.

When Grief Comes to School: Protocol for School Crisis Response

ISSUE	RESPONSIBLE STAFF MEMBER(S)	COMMENTS	YES	NO	YES
Obtain accurate information (re: incident)	Principal or Designee				
Contact and meet with LCT Coordinator (Counselor at School)	Principal or Designee				
Complete Assessment of Severity	Principal or Designee				
Contact Assistant Superintendent (If not immediately available, contact the Chief School Leadership Officer)	Principal or Designee				
Determine who will notify the district Crisis Response Coordinator	Principal or Designee				
Identify students and staff directly impacted	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator				
Identify students and staff with secondary impact	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator				
Provide facts and update them as needed to LCT and DCT members	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator				
Identify CARE Room location(s)	CARE Team Coordinator				
Assign CARE Team Roles	CARE Team Coordinator				
Stock Care Room(s)	CARE Team Coordinator				

Complete written statement (re: incident for staff, students, and parents)	Principal	In collaboration with Assistant Superintendent and the Communications Office			
ISSUE	RESPONSIBLE STAFF MEMBER(S)	COMMENTS	YES	NO	YES
Notify staff appropriately (ex: face-to-face in staff meeting)	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator	Not on intercom or closed-circuit TV			
Notify students appropriately	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator/Teachers	Not on intercom or closed-circuit TV			
Develop plan for providing coverage for staff who require care	Principal/Assistant Principal				
Develop protocol for students to receive additional care (ex: release slips, staff referral, etc.)	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator				
Determine if other community resources are needed	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator/CARE Team				
Determine needs of parents (ex: referral information)	Principal/CARE Team				
Set up date and time for staff and CARE team debriefing	Principal/CARE Team Coordinator				
Other					
Other					
Other					
Other					

Crisis Response Resource Manual

All schools are impacted by the realities of death, natural disasters, and even cataclysmic events at some time in their history. The District Crisis Team (DCT) is always available to assist schools in responding to such crises; however, some of the best responses come from schools where the staff has taken time to plan ahead, not only for the physical well-being of their students, but for their emotional well-being as well. This manual was developed to assist schools in both planning for a crisis and responding during a crisis. This manual is not designed to take the place of the Crisis Response Manual developed by the Safety and Security office, but rather to supplement it by providing a consistent framework for responding to the emotional needs of children and faculty at our schools in addition to physical safety issues.

Advanced Preparation for Any Event:

There are logistical arrangements that can assist in a smooth response to any kind of crisis. Making these arrangements prior to the beginning of the school year is invaluable in responding to events throughout the year.

Develop a staff phone tree/messaging system.

Deaths and accidents often occur on weekends or during the evening. Having ready access to a staff phone tree will allow the administrator to contact all faculty members prior to returning to school and give the details of the event and where and when staff should gather in the morning for a briefing on the school's response plan.

Identify a Location and Keep Supplies on Hand for a Care Center.

Care centers are locations where grieving students can come for emotional support. School counselor offices are usually too small for large groups of students. Identifying other potential locations such as group rooms, conference rooms, and empty classrooms ahead of time and making sure that they are stocked (or the counselor's office is stocked) with plenty of tissue and comfortable chairs is important. Paper bags are helpful in case a child hyperventilates. A stack of passes to return to class should be on hand as well. An optional but welcome addition is to have refreshments available for students and counselors. Grief is hard work and takes a lot of energy. Providing water will prevent people from becoming dehydrated or fainting. (Note: PTAs often want to assist in the event of a crisis, and asking them to supply refreshments is a great way to involve them in the healing process.)

Prepare a List of the Home/Cell Phone Numbers of Support Personnel.

If a death or accident impacts a large percentage of the school's population, the school counselors will need additional support. Make sure to keep the cell phone number of the Coordinator of Crisis Response or the Supervisor of School Counseling as they can activate the District Crisis Team to get additional support for your school in the event of a crisis.

Responding to Deaths or Accidents Involving Individual Students

Designate a Media Contact

Local news stations will often contact a school if a student dies or is seriously injured in an accident. Determine ahead of time who will take such calls. In the event of a large-scale disaster, the school district communications specialist will likely handle all media requests; however, with small scale events, the local principal may interface with the media. It's always a good idea to check in with the Office of Communications on how this should be handled.

Confirm and Prepare a Written Statement Regarding the Facts of the Death or Accident.

Prior to giving out any information regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of a student or faculty member, make sure the student's family or the police have verified the cause of death. Releasing inaccurate information can be further traumatic to the family, especially in situations that appear to be a suicide, but later turn out to be accidental. If details are missing or cannot be confirmed, staff should indicate that the cause of death is unclear at this time.

The statement can then be read by individual teachers in the classroom or by counselors that come into the class. Include information on funeral arrangements if it is available and ways students/staff can help the family through donations, cards, etc. Also include information regarding the location of the care centers so that teachers know where to send upset students.

Make sure the front office staff has a copy of the fact sheet, as concerned parents will often flood the front office with phone calls. Having a prepared statement will reduce rumors and ease parental concerns.

Hold a Faculty Meeting Prior to the Beginning of the School Day and at the End of the Day

During the morning faculty meeting the principal or designee should again share the information about the death/accident and pass out information sheets to each teacher. They should also introduce any extra counselors or support staff available and give the location of the care centers. Individual teachers can then share the information with their class first thing in the morning. **It is rarely a good idea to announce the death over the loudspeaker, as this can cause hysteria and a large exodus from class.** If individual teachers are uncomfortable sharing the information, they should be assigned a support person (school counselor or District Crisis Team member) to come to their class and share the information. In addition, classes expecting to be greatly impacted should have a counselor or DCT member accompany the teacher. Recognize that many teachers may be grieving, so make counselors or DCT members available to the staff as well.

Occasionally the student or faculty member's death is expected to have little impact outside of their own classes (for example: a self-contained child, a young elementary school child, a new student, or a child or faculty member who has been out for a long time due to illness). In such situations, the school counselor or support staff may just follow the class schedule of the student and share the details with the impacted classes rather than have all teachers share the information with their first period class.

The faculty should plan to meet again briefly at the end of the day to discuss how the day went and determine if there are additional support needs for the next day.

Care Center Procedures

It is helpful to have some guidelines for overseeing the care of students in the care centers. A good rule of thumb is to have two counselors assigned to each group. This is especially helpful for volunteer counselors who will not be familiar with the students in their group. If someone needs to be removed, another adult will still be available to the group. It is also important not to let the group get too large—twelve students should be the maximum (space permitting). Other students who come in should be directed to a new group. It may be necessary to have several group rooms available.

Have each student sign in when they come to the care center. This will help keep tabs on who was seen and can be checked to identify students who have not been seen by the end of the day but probably need to be seen. Other students are a great source of information. In addition to asking teachers whom they are concerned about, ask students to identify other students who may have been heavily impacted, but are unlikely to come to the care center. Keep a list, and a counselor can check in with these students individually if necessary.

Students should be encouraged to return to class after spending an hour or so in the care center. Let them know that they can return later if they are having a tough time. Students who are so overcome with grief that they cannot function at school will need to have a parent come pick them up. An intervention can be accessed through the Coalition of Treatment Providers if a student appears to be extremely overwhelmed, suicidal, or self-destructive. Try to arrange a lunch break or have food brought in for the counselors. The staff is often so busy talking to students that they do not have a chance to eat.

Talking to Students about Death and Grief

Children and adolescents have very different developmental issues that come into play when talking about death. There are a variety of resources in the resources section to utilize when talking to students about grief based on their age level.

Prepare a Letter to Send Home with the Students.

Work on a letter to send home with the students (see sample letter in the resources section). This letter should include:

- What happened
- What the students have been told
- Funeral arrangements, if known
- Emotional responses parents may see in their children
- Suggestions on how to help their child
- Resources

Other Tips for Responding with Care

- Arrange for a staff member to remove the contents of the deceased student's locker (when applicable) so that they can be returned to the family.
- Do not remove the deceased student's desk or rearrange the seating without having a class discussion first, as hurt feelings may result. Discuss options with the class and decide together how to handle the empty chair.

Guidelines for Facilitating/Debriefing Small Groups

Introductory Phase

- Arrange people in a circle to facilitate processing, if feasible
- Introduce self; clarify role
- Set ground rules (issues of confidentiality, voluntary participation)
- Establish an environment of safety

Fact Phase

- Each individual introduces self and shares:
 1. What they heard about the death
 2. Where they heard it
 3. What their relationship to the deceased was
- Goal is to recreate the experience and reframe and correct misinformation
- The reality of a complex meaningful event is being described by many eyes
- Task definition: establish an experience of competence and eliminate rumors

Feeling Phase

- Begin asking feeling-oriented questions
 1. What is the worst thing about this for you?
 2. How did you feel when it happened?
 3. How are you feeling now?
- Emotional responses are acknowledged, standardized, normalized
- Provide a forum to discuss fears, anxieties, concerns
- Task Definition: group has moved from task-oriented to process-oriented
- Allow spontaneity of interpersonal support

Symptoms

- Focus on issues related to the impact of the event
- Raise questions such as:
 1. How is this affecting you physically and emotionally?
 2. What unusual things did you experience at the time of the event?
 3. What unusual things are you experiencing now?
- Explore common symptoms experienced
- Task Definition:
 - normalization of experience
 - establishing commonality
 - process of reframing and refocusing

Teaching Phase

- Educate the group (re: common stress response; discuss symptoms)
- Teach about the physiology of stress
- Present strategies for alleviating stress response
- Task Definition: establish the normalcy and adaptability of stress responses
- Provide support and direction

Summary

- Attempt to:
 1. Wrap up loose ends
 2. Answer outstanding questions
 3. Provide reassurances
- Emphasize role of communication
- Encourage use of support systems
- Suggest plans of action (appropriate memorial, scholarship fund, commemorative activities)
- Task Definition: acknowledge competence of group experience

Community Debriefing after Trauma

Separate the students from the adults, as adults will not speak freely in front of students if they feel they have to be strong. Pass out index cards so people who wish to remain anonymous with their questions can do so. Have a facilitator as well as a “floater” who can assist if someone needs to leave or needs tissues, etc.

1. Express your condolences to the group.
2. Explain some general guidelines for the debriefing. Explain that physical outbursts will not be allowed; however, they can excuse themselves if they are having difficulty and someone will check in with them.
3. Have group members share where they were and how they felt when they found out about the incident.
4. Provide education on the different feelings they may experience and physical changes such as eating and sleeping difficulties. Normalize feelings and encourage taking care of oneself physically.
5. Explain memory triggers (for example: anniversaries, birthdays, news reports) and how they may be impacted by such events.
6. Ask members to share why they think the event happened.
7. If it is a very large group, have them write down questions and pass them to the front.
8. Reassure them that it is not their fault.
9. Share community resources that are available.

What Helps People after a Traumatic Event?

- Water – helps avoid dehydration
- Exercise/Stretching
- Talking
- Tears
- Accurate Information
- Choices – Reestablish a sense of control. Do you want to sit or stand?
- Group Debriefing
- Anchoring – “This is where you can come if you need any assistance.”

District Crisis Team Checklist

Creating the Plan Collaboratively with the School

The following items should be discussed with the principal and school leadership before the staff meeting:

1. Confirmation on cause of death
2. Social media challenges
3. A school designee to reach out to the family
4. What we are able or not able to say based on conversations with:
 - Family
 - District
 - Law Enforcement
 - Media
5. Parent/Guardian letter regarding the death/crisis
6. Circumstances regarding the death of student or staff
7. Notification by phone for a particular class or group
8. Locker/desk/possessions
9. Will all classes be notified of the death/crisis or just select classes/grade levels?
10. Written out script for teachers (notification and talking points)
11. Opportunity for teachers to request assistance if not comfortable sharing the script
12. Care center locations for students and staff
13. Supplies for care centers and impacted classes: tissue, water, art supplies, and Play-Doh if available
14. Plan for following the student's schedule so that counselors (school and/or DCT) visit each class
15. Estimate on the number of DCT members needed for support
16. Planning for extra subs (if needed)
17. Planning for extra nurses (if needed)
18. Partners in ED/PTSA (food for staff during planning times)
19. Will we meet with youth leaders and club/activity leadership (if applicable) before students are told?
20. Survivor guilt possibility for both students and staff
21. Moment of silence announcement for student/staff member death (AFTER impacted students/staff have been notified)

AM/PM Staff Meeting/Mini Debrief –

Best Case/Worst Case Dealing with the Initial Shock

22. Share the plan for the day and locations of care centers
23. Rumors/social media challenges
24. Siblings/involvement/relationships
25. Identifying students and staff who may need extra support
26. Taking care of self and each other
27. Opportunity for staff to share questions/concerns
28. Follow up and possible end of day staff meeting to debrief

Sample Letter to Send Home

Dear Parents:

I regret to inform you of the death of a student who attended our school.

Jane Doe, a fourth grader, was suddenly killed by a car as she stepped off the school bus.

When we learned of Jane Doe's death, we decided to share this information with the students. It was important for all the students to have the same information to avoid rumors, which start so quickly.

The facts were written down for each teacher to read to the class. Counselors and the District Crisis Team were on hand to visit each class, offering the children a time to talk and to share feelings.

Students who were most upset were taken aside for individual or small group discussion. Ongoing grief and loss groups will be formed to give some of the students more time to adjust to this tragedy.

The funeral arrangements are as follows:

Cards and letters may be sent to her family at:

Our plans for a school memorial are (if known):

Your student may experience grief, and you may see some of the following emotions.

- o Tearfulness
- o Bad dreams
- o Irritability
- o Clinging to you
- o Whiney moods
- o Physical complaints—stomachaches, headaches, etc.
- o Inability to concentrate
- o A temporary dip in grades
- o More pronounced fears of dying, of the dark, of you dying, of walking home alone, etc.
- o Regressive behaviors such as reverting to thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, etc. (*include for elementary only)

Listed below are some ideas that can help your child with grieving:

- o Read a book on grief together.
- o Let your child talk about the death or draw pictures of what he or she felt happened.
- o Let them express their feelings.
- o Offer them loving, touching support.
- o Allow them to be sad and to cry.
- o Let your child ask questions and answer them as simply as you can. If you need to, it's okay to say, "I don't know how to answer that. Perhaps we can find someone who can help us."
- o Reassure your child you are healthy, you are careful when you drive, and you will be around for a long time.
- o Explain the ritual of funerals and allow their participation.
- o Offer support and structure in completing homework.

If there are any questions or concerns about your student's behavior, please call on the following:

Sincerely,

Principal

Sample Script for Teachers

Information for Students (when cause of death is not confirmed)

I am very sorry to share with you that we have some very sad news impacting our school community. We were notified yesterday that _____, a _____ grade student, has died.

It's normal to feel shocked, sad, and even angry when someone we know dies. Even if you did not know _____, you may be feeling upset or sad as it can remind you of other losses.

Please be especially caring and supportive to one another today and know that you may see some students and adults crying today. This is a normal part of grief. There will also be some extra adults in the building to help.

Do any of you have any ideas of things we can do to support her family?
(examples: make cards or send notes)

Do any of you have any ideas of what we can do to help support each other during this difficult time? (Listen, be supportive, give hugs)

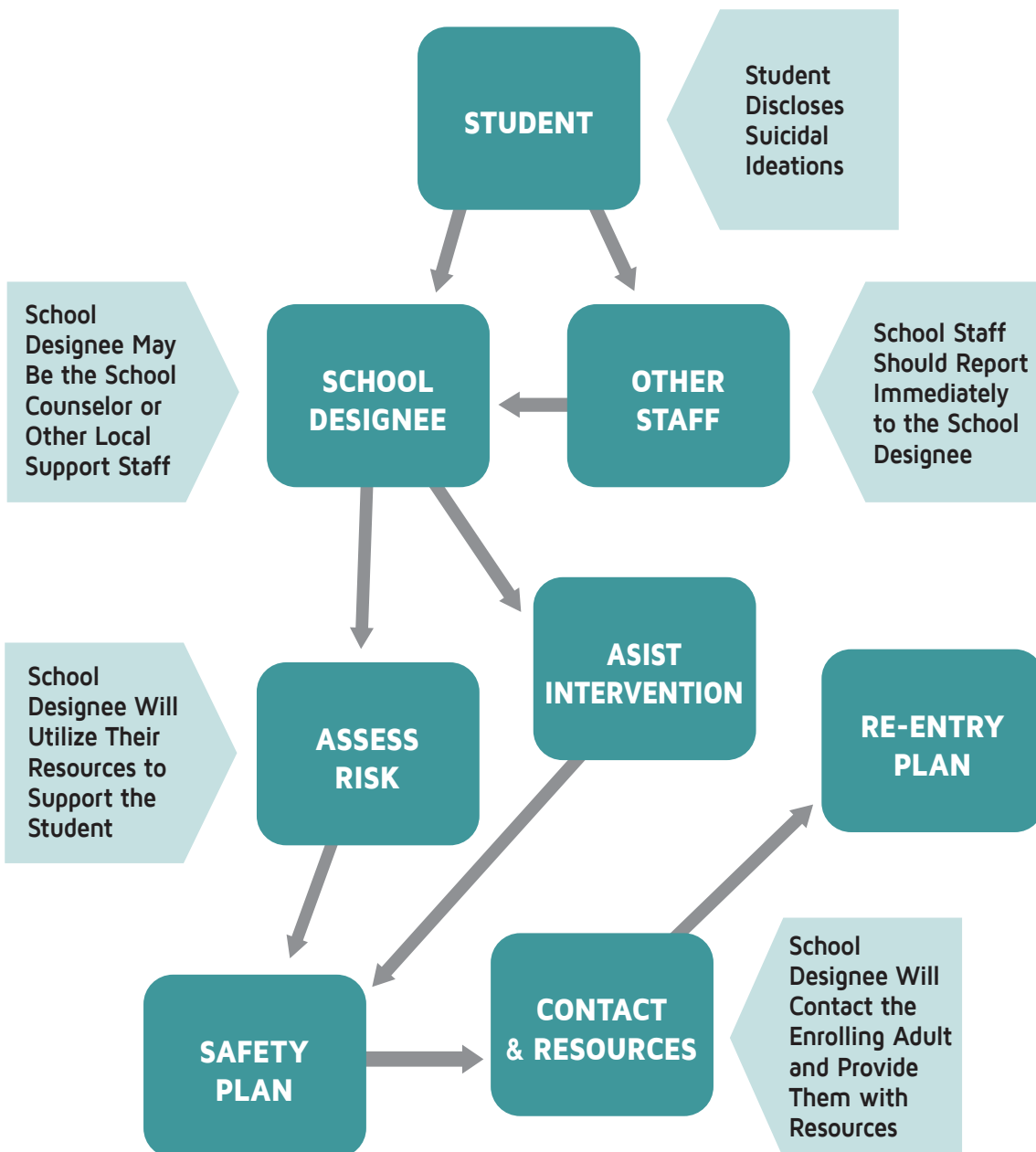
If you need someone to talk to, we will have extra counselors available in a Care Center, so just let me or your other teachers know.

*If students ask about the cause of death, let them know that we do not have that information yet. You can ask what they have heard and mention that we have heard that too. If you feel comfortable talking about grief and loss, it is okay to allow students to share other losses they have experienced and what helped them get through the difficult times.

**If cause of death is known and confirmed, share the information in the script and process any "teachable moments" available from the cause of death (i.e. wearing seatbelts, driving speed limit, getting help for mental health/substance use issues as they are treatable diseases). Be careful not to blame. Offer messages of hope, help, and support.

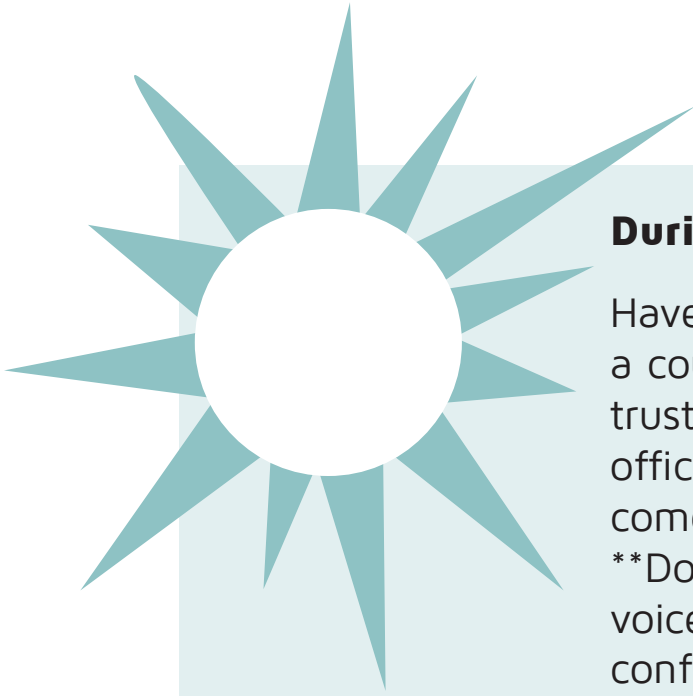


Suicide Protocol



School Staff Reporting

What to Do When a Student Discloses to You



During the School Day

Have an adult bring the student to a counselor or send a note with a trusted student to the counseling office requesting that a counselor come to your room immediately.

****Do not email or leave a voicemail. You must get verbal confirmation that a counselor is coming to check on the student.**

After School Hours

Contact your local DFCS office.
Save this number in your cell phone.

Contact your principal.

Upon immediate return to the school building,
contact the school counselor.



Media Coverage Overview

Crisis Protocol

1

STEP ONE

Principals should secure the campus and ensure that all students and staff are safe.

2

STEP TWO

Principals should contact Assistant Superintendent about the event to make them aware of what is happening.

3

STEP THREE

Principals should conclude their initial investigation and summarize their findings with anything they find to be relevant.

4

STEP FOUR

Principals should communicate their summary to the Assistant Superintendents so that the district can support them with communications options.

5

STEP FIVE

Once facts are confirmed, principals receive district support from Communications Department and release detailed communication to their community.

What if the Media Wants to Interview/Film/Photograph Someone at the School or It Relates to the School?

For events or media requests related to students and/or staff, first contact the Communications Department for media event approval. (The Communications Department should be notified prior to media being invited on campus.) Please include name of media outlet, reporter, description of request, along with date and time if applicable.

For media interested in interviewing/filming/photographing students, the parents of the students will need to sign Permission to Allow Student to Participate in Media Relations or Interviews.

There Is a Crisis Related to My School. *How Will the Communications Department Support Me?*

Please read the content dedicated to crisis communication. The main takeaway is to contact the Communications Department when a crisis arises so they can help with internal and external messaging.

References

- M. Marsh, P. Agatston, A. Murphy, C. Jaffe, & J. Dess, (2018). Safety Plan. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- M. Marsh, P. Agatston, A. Murphy, C. Jaffe, & J. Dess, (2018). Conference Summary. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- M. Marsh, P. Agatston, A. Murphy, C. Jaffe, & J. Dess, (2018). Reentry Plan. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- M. Marsh, and P. Agatston, (2020). CARE/Crisis Team Plan. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- P. Agatston, and M. Marsh, (2020). Crisis Response Manual. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- A. Huguelet, and M. Marsh, (2019). Suicide Protocol Flowchart. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- M. Marsh, and A. Huguelet, (2019). School. Staff Reporting. Created for the Cobb County School District.
- M. Marsh, (2020). Media Coverage Overview. Created for the Cobb County School District.

Trainings and Online Resources

Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Resource Prevention Center: <https://www.sprc.org/keys-success/evidence-based-prevention>
- Signs of Suicide: <https://www.mindwise.org/what-we-offer/suicide-prevention-programs/>
- Sources of Strength: <https://sourcesofstrength.org>
- More Than Sad: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/more-than-sad/>
- The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2020/04/03/implications-of-covid-19-for-lgbtq-youth-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/>
- *A Flicker of Hope* book: <https://ncyi.org/product/a-flicker-of-hope/>

Suicide Intervention

- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): <https://ncyi.org/product/a-flicker-of-hope/>

Suicide Postvention

- PREPaRE School Safety and Crisis Training: <https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>
- Kate's Club Atlanta: <https://katesclub.org>

Crisis and Support Services

- Crisis Text Line: Text TALK to 741-741 to text with a trained crisis counselor for free, 24/7
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone with thoughts of suicide and loved ones. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Callers are routed to the closest possible crisis center in their area.
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

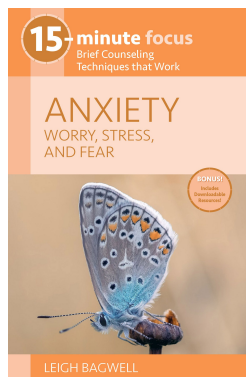
Online Resources

- Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>
- After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/after-a-suicide-a-toolkit-for-schools/>
- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement:
<https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org>

15-minute focus

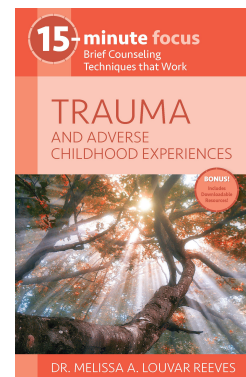
Brief Counseling Techniques that Work

Other titles in this series



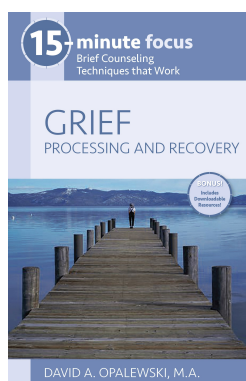
ANXIETY **Worry, Stress, and Fear** Leigh Bagwell

In this book, Bagwell explains the physiological progression from a trigger to a full-blown anxiety attack, and provides a variety of prevention and intervention strategies for school counselors, educators, and administrators.



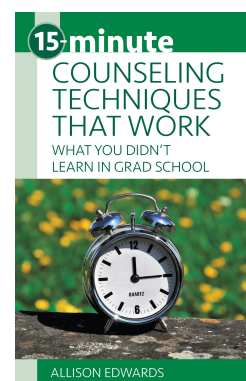
TRAUMA **and Adverse Childhood Experiences** Dr. Melissa A. Louvar Reeves

In this book, Reeves explains trauma and the overlap with anxiety, and provides understanding for behaviors associated with trauma and why they occur, along with a variety of strategies for school mental health professionals, educators, and administrators.



GRIEF **Processing and Recovery** David A. Opalewski, M.A.

In this book, Opalewski gives schools a guide for addressing the death of a student or staff member, including what to say and what not to say to students along with helpful communication and intervention strategies for school counselors, educators, and administrators.



15-Minute Counseling Techniques that Work *What You Didn't Learn in Grad School* Allison Edwards

Children come to us with a variety of problems, searching for answers. While these solutions may work temporarily, we really never help children until we give them tools—or techniques—to manage thoughts and feelings on their own. The techniques in this book will help children feel empowered to face everyday challenges and equipped to manage their stress and emotions.