



**District** \_\_\_\_\_

**School** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## School Crisis Response: A Classroom Meeting Sample Format

### Step 1: Introduction

- Introduce yourself if not known to the class.
  - Explain you are here to help children understand their feelings and
  - To answer questions

### Step 2: State Facts - Exploring Experiences

- State the facts as you know them. Talk in age appropriate language.
- Generalize the experience talking broadly about the issue before dealing with specifics. (i.e. accidents are sometimes unavoidable and sometimes preventable, etc.)
- Ask the students if they have heard anything different. Clarify discrepancies.
- Ask the students how the tragedy has impacted their lives.
- Ask the students how they have coped with the tragedy and/or tragedies in the past.
- Defusing: For younger students (grade K-5), use art and storytelling to explore the experience.

### Step 3: Normalizing

- Describe what “normal” reactions (thoughts, feelings, behaviors) to this tragedy are.
- Understand that this event may also be a “trigger” for feelings they have had in the past during times of danger, threat, fear, or sadness.
- Explain what children should do if they feel like they are experiencing unusual reactions or problems associated with the tragedy.

### Step 4: Basic Expectations Students Need to Hear

- “This is a time when it is not unusual for us to look for reasons why this happened. Rumors can get started that are not helpful in healing. If you hear stories that are different from what we’ve told you, please do not spread them and let one of us know so that we can follow up with them.”
- “Sometimes we want to blame others. This is normal but it simply does not help and can cause serious problems.”
- “Although it is normal to be angry, it is not acceptable to seek revenge. We will simply not tolerate any conduct that appears revengeful in any way.”



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#### Step 4: Basic Expectations Students Need to Hear (cont.)

- “Sometimes situations like this raise questions or issues you have never dealt with before. It is important to ask questions and explore the emotions you are experiencing. Please contact one of us for assistance if you are having difficulty or just want to talk further about this or anything else.”
- If suicide is involved: “Suicide *is not an answer* if you are feeling isolated, stressed out or hopeless. Those choosing suicide will often be seeking immediate relief. When you are dead you do not experience the “feeling” of relief. You experience no feelings. If you or any of your friends make comments or have thoughts about suicide, please come talk to one of us immediately so that we can help.”

#### Step 5: Conclusion

- Inform students of any related activities planned over the next few days. (i.e. assemblies, police presence at the school, schedule changes, extra security, memorials, funeral services, etc.)
- Ask students if there are any other questions or issues that they would like to discuss before adjourning.
- If appropriate, express your personal impression of their participation in the activity.
- For younger children, find a way to display/share artwork or writings.
- Reinforce again the availability of counselors and psychologists to help students.