

Guidelines for Flight Team Staffing Safe Rooms

Remember, you don't have to have all the answers. The most important gift you have to offer is your willingness to be present and to listen. When talking to students:

LISTEN - To what they are saying.

OBSERVE - "It looks to me like you're..."

VALIDATE - "It makes sense to me that you feel/think that."

REFLECT - "If that happened to me I might feel/think..."

- When giving students information regarding the tragedy, **stick to the facts** that have been released by the school's administration and do **rumor control**.
- Have students who enter the Safe Room **sign in and out**. Check with those leaving the Safe Room to make sure they're doing OK. Invite them to check in later if they like.
- **Encourage students to do one of the following: remain** in the Safe Room, be in their classrooms or in other **areas supervised by an adult**. If they want to go home, see if a phone call to a parent instead would help them make it through the day at school. Sometimes it works to have a parent come to the school to be with their child for a time. If none of these methods work, follow school procedures for check-out. Remember, grief is processed in the environment of the loss so try to help them stay.
- Encourage students to **take a recess or lunch break** to let off energy and regain some sense of normalcy. Take a break when you feel a need; you are **modeling good self-care**.
- Encourage students to **express** themselves through drawing pictures or writing letters. Have a variety of activities available so students have some choices for processing.
- Keep a **list of students** who exhibit more extreme emotion or withdrawal, those you are especially concerned about and those who may need follow-up services, with a counselor or therapist. Offer students an opportunity to visit with a counselor if they wish to do so.
- Ask for a break when you feel a need; you are **modeling good self-care**.
- Remember that there will be different expressions of grief. One group will tend to be in shock, denial, disbelief or confusion. These will be kids who knew the deceased and are at the beginning of the grief process. Another group will likely be in a more full-blown state of grief; perhaps crying or sobbing. These students may or may not know the deceased, but have an unresolved death in their past. The current tragedy has simply broken down their defenses and has put them back into the pain of an earlier time. This may be amplified if the school-related loss was also a friend.
- Let students be in charge of their feelings. **Allow them to choose the length of the Safe Room stay**. Some students are there to support their friends. Work to short-circuit those who simply add drama.
- Listen for kids who seem to **feel the need to DO** something. Invite them to help plan the Life Tribute. Give suggestions about and encouragement to be creative.
- **Network for and refer students** to counselors and other resources when appropriate.