

## Sample List of How School Districts/Schools Can Help Students Deal with Loss

### A. Foster Resiliency

1. Identify supportive adults in children's lives – These often include family members and teachers, but may also be expanded to include scout leaders, coaches, religious leaders and first responders to whom children can turn in the event of an incident.
2. Create positive connections by developing classroom projects – These projects can increase the opportunities for teamwork and respect. They also can provide children with a sense of belonging and contributing to something beyond themselves. Ideas can include artwork for the school buildings around themes of helping, respect, and diversity.
3. Enhance positive attitudes by developing coping strategies – The idea of mastery and control over an event is another important ingredient for resilience. Positive thinking can be used before taking tests, giving presentations, etc. The skills need to be practiced during day-to-day activities, not only when a traumatic incident occurs.
4. Teach children to relax in the face of difficulties – Help them to master simple relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, or using imagery.
5. Help children set realistic goals – Have them think in baby steps. Children need to understand that problems do not need to be managed all at once, but can be solved by attacking them one piece at a time. Children can begin to think of problems as a pie and to develop solutions for each piece of the pie.
6. Help children identify positive coping strategies – These may take many forms and can be used at different times. In general, active coping strategies (i.e., doing something positive to help-such as writing cards or letters, collecting money or volunteering, making positive self-statements, exercising, eating well, keeping a journal, getting together with friends or families) are associated with better outcomes than avoidant or passive coping (i.e., withdrawal, self-blame, denial).
7. Increase children's sense of master and control over events.

### B. What Works

1. Provide children and adolescents with opportunities to share and discuss their feelings and concerns – This enables parents/guardians and other caring adults to correct any misinformation or misperceptions and to provide reassurance about safety.
2. Encourage children and adolescents to resume normal roles and routines or develop new routines – Youngsters feel safe and secure when their activities are predictable and not always focused on the negative events.
3. Maintain social connections – Youngsters' friendships and social activities are important for normalizing children's and adolescents' lives and

- promoting good adjustments.
4. Reduce or minimize children's and adolescents' exposure to upsetting images – After an incident, eliminate viewing of images without an adult present, restrict media viewing, discuss news shows and other programming with children, and actively encourage alternative activities (i.e., reading, athletic activities, games with friends).
  5. Encourage children and teens to stay healthy and fit by eating well and getting regular exercise and proper sleep. Maintaining good health is important for coping with stress.
  6. Encourage children and adolescents to use positive strategies for coping.

#### C. What Doesn't Work

1. Avoiding discussions of distressing incidents – Parents/guardians and other caring adults may think that children are not bothered by incidents or that discussion of incidents will be upsetting to them; however, this may lead to missed opportunities for sharing and support.
2. Pressuring children to talk – Create a positive, receptive atmosphere for discussions, and let children bring issues up as they choose. Occasional direct questions about how a child is doing will communicate to the child that the parent/guardian or adult is interested.