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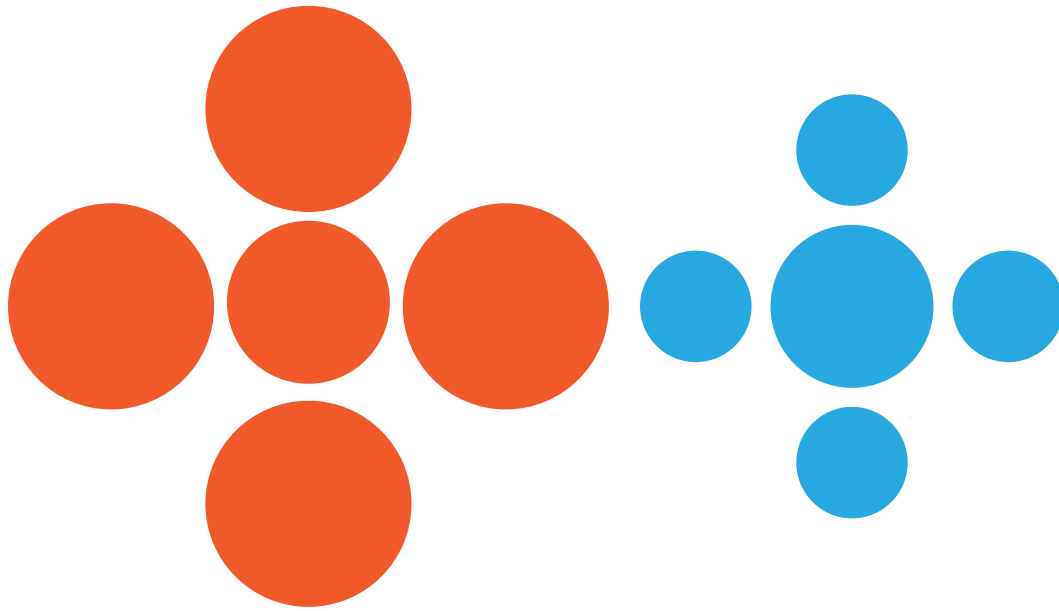
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SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND CONNECTIONS

BY STEVE MURRAY

Recently I attended a workshop on connections and networks with 50 attendees from various non-profit organizations around the state. To demonstrate the power of connections and networks, attendees were invited to share a problem, dilemma, or concern they were facing. As problems were shared audience members were encouraged to connect and raise their hand if they had ever experienced a similar situation. One by one, though the power of networking, the issues that were shared were on their way to being resolved. At the end of the session, everyone left with a broad network of professional contacts and a toolkit of resources and ideas.

The Illinois School Counseling Association (ISCA) and American School Counseling Association (ASCA) provide connections and networks for school counselors. If you are facing a problem, dilemma, or concern, you can discuss your issues or follow the issues of your fellow counselors on Twitter and Facebook via the ISCA website or use the ASCA SCENE. (You'll need to set up an account on the SCENE if you don't already have one.)

ISCA has planned several professional networking events in the coming months.

■ February 3-7: National School Counseling Week

ASCA has developed material to help you promote School Counseling Week. Many of these documents are free and can be downloaded or ordered on www.schoolcounselor.org. Order your materials by January 24, 2014, to ensure they arrive in time.

■ February 26: Day on the Hill

Join your colleagues for a day to lobby the legislature.

■ March 5: Ethics and School Counseling

Join ASCA expert Carolyn Stone as she reviews the latest literature on ethics and school counseling. This event will be held at the Universal Technical Institute Campus at Lisle. Watch for information in the near future.

■ April 11: Springfield/April 25 Skokie Conference "Doing More with Less"

Join your colleagues, and connect with your professional network.

AWARDS

If you admire the work of someone in the counseling profession, nominate him or her for one of the ISCA Counselor of the Year Awards. Nomination information is available at ilschoolcounselor.org.

Contact Steve Murray, ISCA president, at smurray@nddons.org.

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CRISIS PLANNING RESOURCES

Crisis intervention planning requires the development of policies and procedures that can be activated on short notice, provide emotional support to individuals, and help restore the community to its pre-crisis functioning.

Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools— *Download this free resource from SAMHSA*
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PUTTING TECHNOLOGY TO WORK FOR COUNSELORS

BY ERIN MASON

As a former school counselor turned counselor educator, I'm always eager to swap and share practical ideas with those working in the field, especially school counselors. I know how significant it is to hear those nuggets of genius that can truly make your work more efficient, creative, or more engaging for students. You know the ones I'm talking about because they make you excited and you cry out (out loud or in your head), "Oh! I could do that at MY school!"

These nuggets of genius can also come from school counseling graduate students. They often have an innovative slant on the field, given that their knowledge of school counseling is mostly grounded in a theoretical perspective and not yet based on experience. I find this to be especially true with innovations that include technology. Michael, a former student and new school counselor, is a prime example of just the kind of innovation I'm talking about. Take it away, Michael!

Erin Mason



After about 40 students used the guide, I reviewed data that was collected about its use. Students overwhelmingly found the guide easy and fun to use. They felt like the information stuck with them. They also liked the fact that the information would always be available to them on their iPad as a PDF file or an iBook. Based on the student feedback, I made some changes and updates, including adding more pictures, utilizing more interactive maps, and noting cultural elements for students coming from other countries.

Now as a new counselor at Niles North High School, I'm seeing firsthand just how easy it is to convert the guide from one high school to another. My student caseload this year is 50% international students and the need to help them transition is tremendous. Having a tool that's not only easy but fun to use really helps engage my students. This guide also assists me in making connections with and learning more about each student. As students use the guide, it offers opportunities to ask questions, have conversations, and check for understanding. It also allows me to introduce myself to them as their counselor, advocate, and resource.

Overall, the guide is a living tool that changes and evolves with the needs of each year and each new student. The beauty is, making any desired changes takes only a few clicks and then it's back up and running, ready to go. Dr. Mason, thank you for letting me share this idea and for all your support along the way.

Erin Mason, Ph.D., is assistant professor of Human Services and Counseling at DePaul University. This article reprinted with her permission; originally in College Week live.

Michael



Thanks Dr. Mason! The idea came to me while working with transfer students during my internship at Prospect High School. Transfer students were not only coming from different districts, but often from different countries. I saw a need for some kind of tool that could assist in introducing students to their new school, extracurricular opportunities, and shortcuts on campus.

To start, I developed a visual, dynamic guide of the campus that could be used on the iPad. These days, iBooks are able to do everything from delivering information via plain text to interactive maps, videos, pictures, and

even built-in quizzes to help verify a student's understanding of the subject. Plus, students love using tablets! The guide leads students on an interactive tour of the school building. Along the way, they learn about important people and resources. By the end of the tour, the student is several steps closer to feeling more comfortable and "in the know" about their new school. Who doesn't feel a lot better by being able to put a name to a face, find the cafeteria, and know where to find the counselor's office?

Shown below are screen shots from a tour of Prospect High School in Mount Prospect, Illinois.





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BY THE NUMBERS

Crisis management and response is a huge undertaking. Breaking down the important components into 10 areas can help you manage an otherwise overwhelming process.

BY SCOTT POLAND, ED.D.

In the wake of a crisis in a school or in the community, staying calm and working with the issues at hand is vital to a well-run program. Remember these 10 rules, and you'll make your way through a tough time with calm control.

1 Verification of the facts is essential. Double check the facts with police and adults to ensure you have correct information. Example: The secretary reported that Ms. Wilson at the local high school was killed, but soon corrected information verified it was Ms. Smith.

2 Make decisions as a group. Experience has shown that the wisest decisions are made in a group. School counselors should be part of the crisis response teams, and teams should make decisions as quickly as possible. School counselors need to ensure that the building administrator has all of their contact numbers so they can have input early in crisis planning. The role of school counselors may include serving as the architect of crisis plans, key confidant of administration, and direct service provider to affected staff and students. After a crisis, administrators need to review crisis plans and assign duties while empowering their staff. One principal told her crisis team that this would be the worst day they ever spent in education, which did not necessarily encourage the team members to do their best. Schools should be kept open if at all possible or reopen quickly. Schools offer support to children, and when they are closed due to a crisis, many children are left unsupervised. In other cultures, school have been closed permanently due to violence to honor the dead, but in our western culture, this dramatizes and glorifies the actions of the perpetrator.

3 Help the faculty. Offer support to faculty members most affected by the crisis and provide faculty with direction about how to best support students. Media coverage and cell



The administration needs to be seen as the dispenser of accurate information.

phones often result in information being transmitted quickly. The administration needs to be seen as the dispenser of accurate information. One quick way to notify faculty and give them direction is to send a message by computer and announce that all staff need to check their computers. Faculty appreciate when those messages contain a script of what to say to students.

4 Share information truthfully with students in a developmentally appropriate manner. Younger children should be protected from explicit details and horrific media coverage, but no student should be lied to or misled about the circumstances. Students need to hear sad or tragic news from trusted adults such as their teachers or school counselors, not from someone on the street. Students need to be given permission for a range of emotions and provided opportunities to ask questions and to express emotions through artwork, music, and writing. One New York City teacher reported that even though her classroom looked out on the World Trade Center, the principal told her to not talk to students about what had happened on September 11, 2001. Desks

should be arranged in a circle and students allowed to express thoughts and concerns with the emphasis placed on coping skills and student safety. The majority of students should get the help they need in classrooms, with support personnel such as counselors and psychologists coming to classrooms to assist teachers with group discussion.

5 Inform parents of what has occurred, and reunite younger children (pre-K to second grade) with parents as soon as possible. Parent communication needs to be consistent through either phone calls or e-mails, and schools need to be prepared with sign-out procedures for when large numbers of parents come to campus to pick up their children. One middle school principal wanted to write a letter to parents informing them that a gun had been brought to campus and threatening remarks were made but the suspected perpetrator was in custody and steps were taken to assure students of their safety. However, the superintendent chose to keep the incident from the public. Two days later, it was front-page news in the paper, and the PR damage was extensive.

6 Set media policies and procedures well in advance of any crisis. Make sure these policies are in place following the crisis and that media are kept away from staff and students. Designate one person to be the media spokesperson. Following one crisis, the media were kept off school grounds across the street, and students and staff were encouraged to decline interviews. Some parents have let their children appear on national television after school shootings. We can't stop them, but we can be proactive in recommending that students be shielded from the media.

7 Let the crisis be the curriculum. For a few days after a crisis, or even longer, normal teaching can't be done. The crisis becomes the curriculum, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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administrators need to provide guidance as to when to return to the regular curriculum and when to resume testing. One teacher, with students openly weeping after learning of the death of a classmate, asked if the school counselor wanted to talk with them before or after the scheduled test. Students will let you know when they are ready to get back to the curriculum. In one situation after a multiple homicide at a school, the students asked if they still had to take the state accountability test scheduled for the next week. Unfortunately, the answer was yes. When students are dealing with grief and such strong emotions, they simply can't be expected to focus on learning and testing.

8 Identify those students most affected, and don't underestimate the tragedy's long-term impact. Accept additional assistance when it's offered, and recognize that your role isn't to provide long-term treatment to the students.

Students at the highest risk are those in physical proximity to the crisis, those socially closest to the victim, and those with their own set of tragic life circumstances. Adolescents who have been exposed to violence and have lost friends and classmates often become suicidal.

9 Guide students toward appropriate memorials, and allow for a range of religious beliefs. Students often feel a need to do something in memory of the deceased. Whenever possible, the memorial should benefit the living. Positive examples include starting prevention programs to reduce violence or suicide or volunteering in community prevention programs. Caution is suggested in permanently closing off lockers and erecting memorial statues on campus.

10 Convene the crisis team regularly throughout the crisis management and support the team members. Dis-

cuss what is working and what is not. Focus on what lessons you can learn from this crisis to be better prepared in the future.

School counselors are the ideal personnel to ensure that those most affected by a crisis receive follow-up assistance for as long as needed. Counselors also are the logical personnel to implement prevention programs that address the leading causes of death for children: accidents, homicide, and suicide. ■

*Scott Poland teaches crisis and clinical interventions courses in several programs including school counseling at Nova Southeastern University. He has served on national crisis teams after school shootings in Paducah, Ky.; Littleton, Colo.; Jonesboro, Ark.; and Red Lake, Minn. and after terrorist acts in Oklahoma City and New York City. He can be reached at spoland@nova.edu. This article was previously published in *ASCA School Counselor*, Vol. 44, No. 4.*



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A NEW HOME

Following a crisis, school counselors have an important role in helping displaced students adjust to a new school—and new life.

BY JENNIFER BAGGERLY, PH.D.

One year after moving to a new school due to Hurricane Katrina, a seven-year-old boy still cries hysterically whenever his mother is late picking him up. He fears she may be missing or dead. Yet, another seven-year-old boy, who also moved due to the hurricane, waits calmly when his mother is late, humming a song reminding himself that he is safe and strong.

Beyond genetics and personal histories, what contributes to the difference in these two reactions? In this case, the difference is a comprehensive school counseling crisis intervention plan. The second boy developed a procedural memory of self-soothing activities when he was anxious, but the first boy did not. The second boy was in a school that had:

- a clear crisis intervention plan
- teachers trained in children's typical responses after crises and basic interventions to address those responses
- a school counselor who provided guidance lessons in anxiety management and small-group counseling for displaced students
- parents who received appropriate community referrals from the school counselor
- a principal who collaborated with a school counselor on needed policy changes to accommodate misplaced students

The following approaches can make sure your school is ready to accommodate displaced students after natural disasters such as hurricanes or fires, violence such as school shootings or terrorist acts, or family situations such as homelessness or domestic violence.

THE THREE R'S

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), a comprehensive school crisis intervention plan covers the 3 R's: readiness, response, and recovery. Readiness entails developing effective relationships with law enforcement, emergency responders, health and mental health community agencies, and local reli-

Recovery involves re-establishing routines and social activities so students can experience a sense of certainty and solidarity.

gious institutions, as well as informing all stakeholders of the crisis intervention plan. Response includes calming the fears and anxieties of students and staff, re-establishing a sense of emotional safety and security, and restoring a school environment that is conducive to learning. Recovery involves re-establishing routines and social activities so students can experience a sense of certainty and solidarity. Community support and referrals to mental health counseling are also needed during the recovery phase.

To help displaced students, teachers will need training through workshops or one-on-one consultation. School counselors should explain that after a crisis, many students will experience the following typical responses, which are usually temporary.

Physiological responses: Muscle tension, nausea, headaches, sleeplessness, and fatigue

Cognitive responses: Difficulty concentrating or making decisions, memory problems, intrusive thoughts and images, difficulty establishing safety and trust, skewed perceptions of morality

Emotional responses: Moodiness and inability to manage feelings, ongoing sadness or depression, intense anger, self-blame and guilt, embarrassment of not having basic needs met, inability to maintain intimacy and connections with others, and lower self-esteem

Behavioral responses: Loss of interest in school and play, social withdrawal, hypervigilance, hyperactivity, aggressiveness and fighting, regressive behavior such as bedwetting and

thumb sucking, alcohol and drug abuse, poor hygiene, sexual acting out

Spiritual responses: Doubts about God or religious beliefs, loss of spiritual identity, apathy in religious practices or rituals they previously performed, shattered world view such as seeing everyone and everything as "bad"

The most practical method of helping students manage these responses is to re-establish a routine that is safe and manageable. Ask teachers to post the daily routine, assign trustworthy students to accompany the displaced students through the routine, and adjust homework assignments so displaced students can be successful. When displaced students become upset, instruct teachers to help calm them through basic interventions such as:

- asking them to take a slow, deep breath
- reminding students they are safe right now
- giving them a calming object such as a stuffed animal or a stress ball
- helping students find practical solutions to their most immediate concern
- instructing them to draw or write a happy memory
- prompting them to silently recite a calming thought such as "I know I am OK because ..."
- allowing students to get a drink of water with a new friend

Ask teachers to notify a school counselor about students who continue to have extreme behavioral or emotional responses after the first week or two.

School counselors may also need to challenge teachers' stereotypes of displaced students and help teachers develop a more balanced perspective. For example, when students from New Orleans arrived at small-town schools after Hurricane Katrina, many teachers held stereotypes that these students were "dangerous" and "unruly." School counselors challenged teachers to list these stereotypes, and helped teachers develop a more balanced view that the students had different cultural norms of being "spirited."

CLASSROOM GUIDANCE LESSONS

When displaced students join a classroom, school counselors have a prime opportunity to help all students in the class. Provide classroom guidance lessons that help all students develop their anxiety management and coping skills. Focus on the following four strategies via developmentally appropriate methods, such as puppets or play for elementary school students and games and role playing for secondary students. First, teach students to manage hyper-arousal symptoms through body relaxation such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. Second, help students identify misunderstandings regarding the crisis or new students and provide accurate information. Third, teach students to manage

disturbing thoughts by stopping the negative thought, identifying evidence that they are safe and capable and developing a positive thought to recite. Fourth, help students develop healthy social support by identifying safe and positive people and activities as well as appropriate social skills.

Displaced students who experience ongoing adjustment problems despite teacher interventions and classroom guidance lessons will need small-group counseling. In addition to identifying participants' goals, school counselors should normalize students' symptoms by explaining that many people have similar responses following a crisis.

Follow Judith Herman's three-step trauma recovery method of:

- establishing safety by providing training in anxiety management

and coping skills through play therapy techniques for elementary students and cognitive behavior therapy techniques for secondary students

- facilitating students' trauma narrative through child-centered play therapy or art therapy
- reconnecting students with healthy peers and family members

The students aren't the only ones who will need your help. School counselors may also need to provide parents with information about children's expected responses after a crisis and basic interventions to address these responses. A helpful publication to provide parents is "After the Storm: A Guide to Help Children Cope with the

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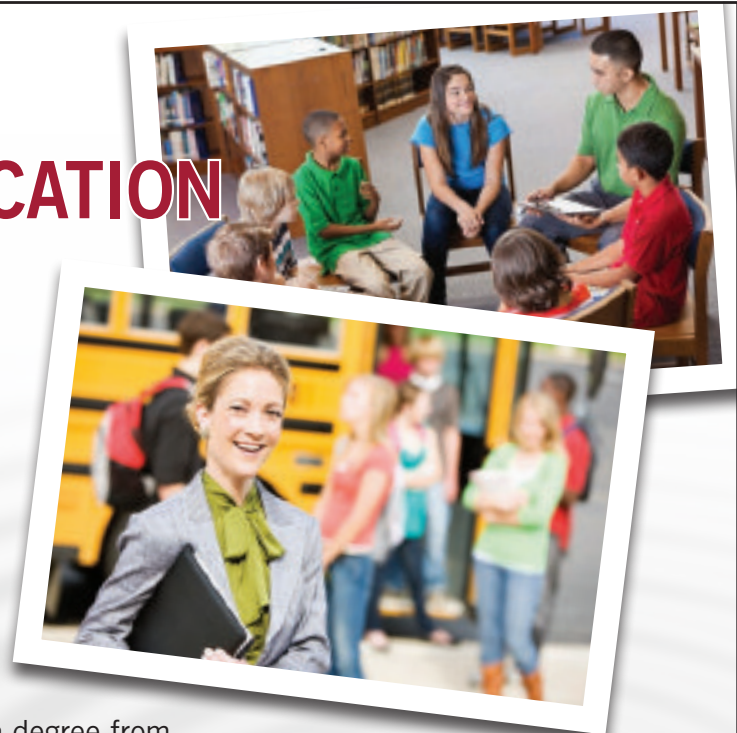
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Psychological Effects of a Hurricane” (see resources list).

School counselors should also consider coordinating resources for school clothing, especially if school uniforms are needed. Parents may also benefit from resource referrals for employment, religious support, housing, community mental health services, etc.

School counselors will need to inform administrators of barriers preventing displaced students from succeeding and to help make needed changes within the school. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, some school counselors advised administrators to relax the school ban on dreadlocks since many displaced students from New Orleans wore dreadlocks. Asking students who had lost their home and all their belongings to cut

INFORMATION RESOURCES

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org

Disaster Mental Health and Crisis Stabilization for Children (video to purchase)
<https://www.academicvideostore.com/video/crisis-stabilization-children-disaster-mental-health>

“After the Storm: A Guide to Help Children Cope with the Psychological Effects of a Hurricane”

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Resource%20Center/Crisis-Trauma-Violence/Sample%20Documents/AfterTheStorm.pdf> (member log-in required)

their hair would have been insensitive and devastating. Due to the school counselors’ advocacy, administrators changed the policy for these displaced students.

By implementing the strategies discussed above, school counselors can be leaders in helping displaced students

achieve academic, career and social/personal success. ■■■

*Jennifer Baggerly, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the University of South Florida. She can be reached at baggerly@tempest.coedu.usf.edu. This article was previously published in *ASCA School Counselor*, Vol. 44, No. 4.*

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SCHOOL SAFETY LESSONS LEARNED: FROM CLEVELAND TO NEWTOWN

BY STEPHEN SROKA, PH.D.

I dealt with school violence before it was fashionable and funded. To me, any child killed anywhere, anytime, is a huge tragedy. But decades ago, when children were killed in the inner city of Cleveland, you probably never heard about them. When the killings moved to suburbs such as Columbine, they became national news. The Newtown shootings shocked the United States like no other school violence. Now, school violence prevention is front-page news. Working with school safety for more than 30 years, I have tried to help schools and communities keep our youth safe and healthy so that they can learn more and live better. Here are several lessons that I have learned.

School violence can happen anywhere, but not here. After school shootings, I have often heard “I cannot believe that it can happen here.” As we have learned, school violence can happen anywhere. But don’t be surprised after the next tragedy if someone says, “I cannot believe that it can happen here.” Denial is human.

Be prepared, not scared. Schools are not powerless. Awareness, education, and advocacy can help break down the attitude that it can’t happen here. Schools and districts need to have a school-community emergency plan of action in place for students, staff, and parents. It should be both practiced and proactive. Practice drills are crucial. Denial allows violence to grow unseen. Preparation allows violence to be dealt with as soon as it is seen.

Social media has changed how we communicate. Texts, Tweets, and Facebook posts, which were not around at the time of the Columbine shootings, now offer instant information—and misinformation. Before problems occur, students need to be part of a dialogue with parents and educators about how schools can responsibly use social media to make schools safer. Social media may prove to be one of the best new tools to help keep our schools safe and parents informed, and to encourage students to take ownership of their schools and education.



*School safety needs to
be built in, not tacked on.*

*Students respond to
people, not programs.*

Bullying is a symptom, and mental health is the issue. Bullying is a hot topic and often is blamed for many of the heinous actions that result in deaths. Although bullying is serious and needs to be addressed, some experts today do not see bullying as a cause, but rather as a symptom of a mental health problem. In fact, bullying is often mentioned as a cause for violence even when it is not, as with the Columbine shooting. Issues such as mental illness, depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, anger, family violence, and substance abuse are often at the root of such destructive behaviors.

Treat the illness, not the symptom. Many professionals would like to provide a comprehensive mental health approach for the schools, families, and community. Perhaps depression screening for all students may prove to be more helpful in identifying those at risk of hurting themselves as well as others. Some experts are now suggesting that teachers be taught mental health

first aid to assist those in crisis. As we often see, hurt people hurt people, and the use of mental health professionals such as school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, school psychologists, and school resource officers may enable us to help people help people.

Building relationships is key. We may need more metal detectors, but we must have more student detectors. The Secret Service found that school shooters usually tell other kids, but not adults. Adults trusted by kids may be given life-saving information. We need to put a human face on school safety. Teaching to the heart, as well as to the head, to reach the whole child, not only academically, but also to the social, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions, will help build a school and community of respect. Social-emotional learning can help students learn in a safe environment. We often say to police officers that you have a more powerful weapon in your heart than in your holster to make your school safer. School safety needs to be built in, not tacked on. Students respond to people, not programs. You cannot mandate kindness, but you can nurture it by building relationships with communication, collaboration, cultural awareness,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

and caring. Words can kill, and words can give life. You choose.

When kindness fails, you need to be aggressive, forceful, and effective.

An emergency plan of action needs to be in place, practiced, and proactive. Teachers and students should be trained and allowed to practice lockdown drills. Parents need both low-tech and high-tech communication systems for responding to school emergencies. Gone are the days of Columbine, when police waited for hours to enter the school. Today, police and community emergency response teams are trained for active shooter/rapid response, to take out the shooter ASAP.

Healing is personal. Schools need to be prepared to deal with the consequences of violence, both immediately and long after the incident. Individuals react to grief in many ways, and there

is no best way to grieve. While some need to process the grief immediately, others need to be left alone. Grief has no specific timeline for everyone.

School safety has entered uncharted waters. When I started working in school safety decades ago, the weapon of choice for school violence was a box cutter or knife. Now it is automatic weapons. What will be next? The unthinkable is now doable, and probably unpreventable. The Newtown shootings raise disturbing issues and questions. Controversial approaches that once would have been considered ridiculous are now being debated, such as arming teachers and having teachers and students take out a shooter by any means possible. Guns, metal detectors, mental health issues, zero tolerance, and other emotional issues make for complex and difficult decisions. A voice of reason is

often lost in the heat of hysteria.

There are no guarantees, only intelligent alternatives. Today, we are better prepared to deal with and prevent school violence than we were in the earlier days in Cleveland and Columbine. We cannot make a 100-percent guarantee that our schools will be free from violence. No easy solutions exist, but we have intelligent alternatives to reduce the risks. It's time for all schools to explore these alternatives. For some, tomorrow may be too late. ■■■

Stephen Sroka, Ph.D., is an adjunct assistant professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, and president of Health Education Consultants. Contact him at drssroka@aol.com.

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LESSONS FROM CHILDREN ON COPING WITH GRIEF

BY SHARON RICHARDS, LCSW

How do children cope with crisis and what can we learn from them? In Professor Child's film, "Children and Grief," 10 children bravely share their stories of coping with the crisis of the death of a loved one. I had the distinct honor of interviewing these children for the film. As you can imagine, all of the children were coping with loss in their own way. Some children appeared extremely resilient and even happy at times, while others were quiet, struggling to stay awake, and clinging to adults. Some children lost parents to disease or suicide, while others lost siblings, relatives, and grandparents due to tragic accidents or old age. How they cope with death is unique to each child, yet a common thread links their stories together and reminds us of the wisdom children possess.

Grief can stretch its arms wide and reach into every part of our lives. It has the potential to loom over us and grow exponentially. But how children view grief and cope with it can be very different than the way an adult might. A child's grief can be seen in the little things that occur in our everyday lives.

"I miss my mom making pancakes in the morning," Dominic, 10.

"What I miss about my dad is wrestling with him," Amba, 7.

"I miss most about my uncle... that he used to play his guitar until we fell asleep," Aurora, 9.

"What I miss most about him (dad) is just kind of having him around... like, when he got home from work and



when he got up in the morning, and now he's not there. It was just nice to have him take us to school," Julia, 9.

"What I miss most about him (dad) is just being him, jolly and awesome," Julesa, 9.

I was struck by the simplicity of their words and the depth of their knowledge. The lesson that little things matter came up over and over throughout the film, especially in response to my question, "What has helped you with your grief?"

Adeline, 5, shares, "I really like to go to the park and play on sunny days."

Aurora, 9, finds comfort talking to her sister and parents about her loss, "Sometimes it just helps to be left alone. I just talk to myself and sometimes take a nap."

"Something I did to help was pet my puppy. (He) really made me feel good and so I would pet him and I would feel better. I just liked being with him. I would talk to my puppy about how I felt and I also liked just how fuzzy his fur was because it was really fluffy," said Julia, 9.

Sequoia, 10, said, "Things that helped me through the whole time was friends, family and some of my stuffed animals." Sequoia goes on to say, "I just talked to them (my stuffed animals). You could actually think they are friends in real life. I think they're family and they are. Like my favorite stuffed animal is Lily, she is a Dalmatian with hearts. When I

needed something, I asked her and she just helped me through it."

Once again, little things and small gestures we may overlook do matter. A pat on the back, consistently checking in on how a child is doing even if he or she doesn't feel like talking, a walk on a sunny day, a hand written card...all of these things matter deeply to these children and they all say it is these little things that help them cope.

When the death of a loved one occurs, adults are often faced with new worries and challenges. In "Children and Grief," I was reminded that children also have worries and challenges, but may not be sharing them out of concern for the adults in their lives. To encourage children to share with you and let them know they are not alone in what they are feeling and experiencing, I recommend an empowering role play exercise. This allows children to



share their worries and challenges while empowering them to find their own solutions. In the exercise, I ask children to write down some worries and challenges they have had. They partner up with someone and give that person their list of worries/challenges. Their partner pretends to be the writer while reading the worries and challenges aloud. The child has the job of giving their partner advice to help him/her feel better. In this way, children are giving themselves advice on how to cope and heal.

Another exercise to help children cope with grief is making a Worry-Free Bead necklace. Children roll sculpting

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clay into small balls and poke a hole with a toothpick through the balls to make beads. While they do this, they say what worry each bead represents. We bake the beads according to the clay directions. While the beads are baking, I have the children envision the heat cooking their worries away and turning them into Worry-Free Beads for a necklace. We then string the beads after they have cooled. I have found that children love this visualization exercise.

As we all know, coping with grief is a process. Alexander, 14, understands this and shares this advice to children coping with grief, "Advice I would give is not to keep it in, you need to talk to someone 'cause it will just keep building and you get frustrated if you keep

holding it in; you get angry. You're supposed to let stuff flow, you're not supposed to hold it in and build that all up." I love that a 14-year-old understands the importance of letting emotions flow in order to begin the healing process. I learned so much about grief from Alexander and all the children in "Children and Grief." I am forever changed by their stories. I hope I never forget that little things matter in life and death, and how far reaching small gestures of kindness can be toward helping others on their healing journey.

Says Julia, 9, "What I've learned is that if you lose a family member, especially if it's a brother or a dad or a mom or a sister, then you can feel like it's more of a gift to have the other family

members you have. It's very nice to have them. You think more of that. And then you feel more like it's a really big privilege to have them, cause before I didn't really feel like that. I felt like they were just there...but now I know that they are really big." ■■■

Sharon Richards, LCSW, is co-founder of Professor Child, which produces educational films and workbooks in which children teach children about challenging life events through sharing their personal stories. Professor Child has produced the films, "Children and Divorce," "Children and Grief," and "Children of Military Families." Learn more, download a free workbook, and watch trailers of the films, at www.professorchild.com.

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LOOKING BACK—AND AHEAD

When a school shooting, natural disaster, or other tragedy occurs, we all rally around those affected. On event anniversaries or other important dates, however, those affected are remembering, and we need to help them heal then, too.

BY CHERI LOVRE

It's tough enough to live through a crisis—school shootings, hurricanes, a student's death. At the time it happens, it seems the whole world is watching, and help is readily available. But where's that help a year after the shooting, or on the student's birthday, or on other anniversaries and important dates?

Perhaps the crisis response area where we most fall short is follow-up. Long-term follow-up, that is. In the midst of the mayhem, chaos, grief, or sadness, we rally to whatever degree our district allows and the situation demands to respond to students' needs. And if we're well trained at crisis response, we might also meet the needs of staff and parents as well.

But what about a year down the road?

We have, unfortunately, witnessed many crisis events in our schools, but few have given us examples of what long-term follow-up really means. Here are a few instances in which schools and others addressed this issue.

In one incident some years back, a student died between middle and high school. The high school principal never knew her, and although her passing was addressed in middle school, nothing was done to provide any recognition of the loss of this girl in the high school years. The month before graduation, her best friends asked the principal if they could somehow honor her memory at graduation. She should have been there with them, graduating.

The principal was open to doing something but wisely didn't want graduation to become a memorial event. He visited with the girl's mother, who gave the principal a few items that best represented her daughter, along with a picture of her. The principal had the picture blown up to poster size and displayed it on an easel at the edge of the graduation stage. At an appropriate point before students received their diplomas, the principal talked a little about her, about visit-



ing with the mother, the items she had shared, and he motioned to her picture, which was temporarily moved center stage, then returned to the edge of the stage before diplomas were presented.

In this high school, students are given two rosebuds when they receive their diplomas with the instructions to give these roses to two people who were instrumental in their being at this important juncture in their lives. Upon receiving their rosebuds, several of the girl's best friends spontaneously walked over and placed one of the roses on the shelf of the easel holding the picture. Equally spontaneously, the principal gathered them up and walked them out to the mother near the end of the ceremony.

What a fitting tribute. This is just one example, but it has some nice aspects. It was appropriate but didn't take over the mood of graduation. It provided a wonderful means of including the family and remembering the girl, and it had an end point. It wasn't starting something that had to be sustained; it was contained in the event itself.

TRIBUTES AND RITUALS

We need to recognize that even though students may not mention the loss to us, they may still be marking the anniversary of a death, the birthday of a friend, and other special days or times without letting us know. Or they may really benefit by having a couple of adults support them in coming up with some small tribute or ritual they can do over the next few years, just taking a few minutes to do something that further lays to rest the loss. Rituals can help kids gain skills and make peace with perhaps the most difficult challenge we all face: the death of a loved one.

At the start of school the year following 9/11, schools in New York all had to decide what they'd do on the anniversary. This was going to be a particularly difficult time and such a difficult way to start the year. The students would hardly know their new classmates, and yet, the date couldn't be ignored.

One elementary school came up with such a fitting tribute that it almost took

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

my breath away. I had no idea it could even be done. Someone knew that it was possible to order butterflies that would hatch on a certain day, each in its own box. The school ordered one for every student, to be hatched on 9/11/02. Just imagine an elementary school in the middle of New York, students surrounding the building and cautiously opening their boxes, releasing hundreds of butterflies. I can think of nothing more lovely to grace a day filled with such sad and frightening memories.

Another aspect of long-term follow-up for New York came out of staff meetings at the schools near Ground Zero at the very end of the year. Many teachers said it gave them courage and strength to be needed by their students, and although the evacuation and displacement into new buildings and doubling up was a horrendous challenge,

they also knew that having those little faces looking up at them, needing them, waiting for them to teach each morning, gave the teachers a great deal to go on in getting through the year. But many were dreading the summer, believing the lack of structure and not having the students around would leave a vacuum in their lives, leaving them open to experiencing the rest of the trauma they'd survived nine months earlier. Some were planning trips to tropical islands, and more than one talked about the fear of getting on the airplane to go home, the fear of starting a new school year, the fear that if a siren went by the school, they'd panic and run and leave the children. Of course, no one did. But the fear was real.

From the moment we realized the teachers' fears, I hatched a plan with Linda Lantieri, founding director of Resolving Conflict Creatively Program,

National Center of Educators for Social Responsibility. If I would write a booklet, which we christened "A Summer of Renewal," she'd find the funding. And if Kinko's would print for cost, we'd figure out a way to get the booklet delivered to schools by the time school was out—in only 10 days time. I wrote one activity for each week of the summer, complete with suggesting a little time for quiet, relaxation, meditation, or prayer; some time for journaling; and some time for action. Activities to get back into life. That was part of the mindset that I so appreciated on the part of Lantieri and all who were responsible for Project Renewal. Lantieri led weekend workshops and brought others in to provide a nurturing time for teachers who wished to participate over the next couple of years following 9/11.

This project recognized the fact that children can only do as well as their



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caregivers or parents do, so perhaps even more important than the counseling we might want to provide students is the support we provide to the adults who care for them—and to ourselves.

ONGOING SUPPORT

In the years following the May 1998 shooting at Thurston High School in Springfield, Ore., the Victims of Crime Act funds in Oregon gave a grant to Springfield School District to provide one-to-one and small-group counseling with students and staff who were struggling in their recovery from the shooting. The district used 212 counselors between May 18 and the end of the school year. They all volunteered their efforts, after both training and careful screening.

The following year, the VOCA grant covered two full-time counselors for Thurston High School and one the

next year. The year after that, only the seniors had been attending in that building when the shooting occurred, so by then it was a greater percentage of staff than students who were continuing in their recovery. That year, students were referred out to community counselors. And by that time, many staff had transferred, retired or left teaching, so many of the teachers and administrators were also new.

Although many schools experience major episodes like Thurston High School did, we often don't arrange for that level of support. There isn't just one answer. But there are many possible moments of need to anticipate. The anniversary of the death. Other similar events that bring news coverage locally ("And this shooting comes only nine months after our own event at...."). School occasions such as graduation. The beginning of the sport season

for the team on which the deceased played. When that team goes on to win a trophy and their friend isn't there to share in the celebration. The loss of any other friend in that group.

If we remember that paying tribute can be a simple thing, and we know to screen and approve all that will be done, students find great reward, comfort, and acceptance by paying tribute. It is so worth the time and effort. ■

Cheri Lovre is director of Crisis Management Institute and has more than 30 years of experience in the field of grief and trauma. The focus of much of her time is working with schools in the aftermath of student and staff death or other tragedies that overwhelm their usual abilities to cope. She can be reached through cmionline.org. This article was previously published in ASCA School Counselor, Vol. 44, No. 4.

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WHEN EARLY TRAUMAS TRIGGER TROUBLE

Internal Family Systems offers an effective way for school counselors to help students address their emotional responses that stem from past experiences.

BY RICK ALBRIGHT, PH.D.

Manny is sitting in your office, having just been sent to you from the principal. His ninth-grade history teacher, Mr. Henry, sent him to the principal after an incident in class in which Manny got angry with his teacher. From what you can uncover, Manny “got up in his teacher’s grill” when Mr. Henry sarcastically confronted him about his recent poor performance on an exam. As you talk with Manny about what happened, he is no longer angry but is now using a quiet, child-like voice and his eyes are watering. If you weren’t a school counselor with years of experience under your belt, you would have difficulty believing that this is the same student who just became aggressive with a teacher. Most of Manny’s teachers describe him as mild-mannered and kind, if a bit distracted and unmotivated. However, this isn’t the first time Manny has had issues with aggression towards a teacher. A similar incident occurred last year with Mr. Johnson, the eighth-grade algebra teacher, who, come to think of it, also tends to be a bit sarcastic with students as a way to confront them on their poor academic performance. Plus, Mr. Johnson is also a male teacher. This is an interesting coincidence...or is it?

School counselors are no strangers to the notion that students become triggered emotionally by certain teachers. Some students respond better to male teachers, some to female, some with warm nurturing personalities, some with stoic demeanors, and some to any number of other multicultural characteristics. Many times, how kids respond to their teachers, either positively or negatively, can be traced back to their early developmental experiences, often within their family of origin.

Manny’s anger and aggressiveness were triggered by the sarcastic attitude of his male teachers. Manny’s response can be tracked back to his anger at his mother’s ex-boyfriend, who was cruel to him and his younger siblings and abusive to Manny’s mother when



Over the years, I have been amazed to see the extent to which people, kids especially, can relate to the basic, simple, yet insightful concepts of Internal Family Systems.

Manny was in preschool and elementary school years ago. As the oldest child, Manny stood up to his stepfather to protect himself, his mother, and his siblings. Now nine years later, Mom’s boyfriend is long since gone but Manny is still suffering from the trauma of those years and it is affecting him behaviorally and academically.

As school counselors, our default is often to refer out a student when we run up against one suffering from trauma, and many times that is the right action. Best practices tell us that students suffering from trauma are best served by long-term therapy that is best delivered and managed outside of the school setting. However, with more and more students on our caseload who have mental health concerns, with a dearth of outside resources to keep up with the demand, and with the inability or unwillingness of families to use those outside resources, school counselors often find ourselves the only real option. The challenge for school counselors is to best meet the needs of the children in our care with the delivery systems and tools at our disposal.

School counselors using the ASCA National Model have some amazing

delivery systems from which to provide meaningful support and guidance, both preventative and responsive. These include classroom guidance, small group, and individual counseling. School counselors also have a wealth of theories and tools that fit well in those delivery systems including unique techniques drawn from solution focused brief therapy, reality therapy, and cognitive-behavioral theories, to name a few. Most of the common school counseling approaches, however, are very present-future oriented. Consequently, it can be especially challenging to find a way to use these theories to address issues from a student's past that are influencing them in the present.

Another approach, one most typically utilized in therapeutic settings, can be used effectively in school settings to help students, especially teens and preteens, better understand and control their instinctual responses. Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a therapeutic approach developed by Richard Schwartz in the mid-1990s that conceptualizes individuals as a collection of "parts" that have been formed from our personalities and distinct experiences. As I share with my students, my "teaching part" that they see in class is much different, even sounds different than my "nurturing part" that goes home and plays with my daughters and new-born baby. And, once in a while,

usually after an especially difficult or stressful day at work, my "pig-out part" becomes triggered and I go home and scour the refrigerator for any pizza, pop, and ice cream. My pig-out part has become adept at getting an endorphin rush to my exhausted brain, even if it isn't necessarily aware of what it is doing or why it is doing it. Sometimes our parts are helpful and functional, other times, they are not.

Over the years, I have been amazed to see the extent to which people, kids especially, can relate to the basic, simple, yet insightful concepts of Internal Family Systems. And because the concepts and principles of IFS are so easily

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taught, they can potentially fit very nicely into the psycho-educational approach taken by most school counselors in their office and in the classroom. One tool that I have found particularly helpful in my work with teenagers in groups and individually is "Parts Work: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life" (Holmes & Holmes, 2007). In classroom guidance lessons, students seem to so appreciate and relate to the distinct parts of the character Gollum (and Smeagol) from the Lord of the Rings movies. These clips provide a meaningful way to teach students intrapersonal awareness that can impact their interpersonal relationships.

When students are provided a lens through which to better understand their parts and how these parts are triggered, they then have the opportunity

When students are provided a lens through which to better understand their parts and how these parts are triggered, they then have the opportunity to better control their reactions.

to better control their reactions. Without spending too much time talking with Manny about his mother's mean boyfriend from the past, we can help him understand where this part of him

comes from, mindfully recognize this part when it shows up, and appreciate this part for the protective role it is trying to play. Most important, as Manny's self-awareness is enhanced, he secures the opportunity and ability to better control this aggressive part, preventing it from getting him into trouble and negatively impacting his grades.

I have an optimistic part that is active right now. That part is hopeful that you find something in this approach that will support you in the important work you do with your students. ■■■

Rick Albright, Ph.D., a former school counselor, is now an assistant professor at Lee University in southeastern Tennessee. He can be reached at ralbright@leeuniversity.edu. Please contact the author for references to this article.



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The poster features a dark blue background with a cluster of colorful dots in shades of purple, blue, green, and yellow on the right side. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with varying font sizes and colors (white, yellow, pink, and teal) to highlight key information.