



CHILDREN'S GRIEF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

COPING WITH THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM IN YOUR SCHOOL OR ORGANIZATION

IMPORTANT NOTE: *If there is an emotionally or psychologically unstable student in class, consult with the school psychologist, counselor, social worker, nurse, or special education teacher and the child's parents.*

Terrorism brings unique aspects of grief coupled with the potential for a contagion of fear.

Prepare:

- Be aware of your school's plan for an attack in your area
- Define roles and responsibilities for a crisis
- Identify potential problems before they happen
- The plan should be adaptable and flexible
- Provide crisis training for teachers and staff
- Create a crisis team with leaders to coordinate interventions and disseminate information

Following an attack:

- Identify students who may have family members in the area where the terrorism occurred; provide immediate intervention
- Administrators should be visible
- Calmly present students with the known facts
- Establish as much of a sense of personal safety as possible
- Be honest about safety concerns
- Avoid repetitious visual images of the tragedy by limiting media exposure
- Allow students to discuss their feelings in an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety.
- Maintain normal routines whenever possible
- Provide physical outlets for stress
- Encourage the parents to leave their children in school if the area is relatively safe.
- Latchkey children should not be left alone at home during a traumatic event
- Recognize the diversity of those lost in the attack
- Differentiate between terrorists and responsible members of our community
- Encourage kindness to all regardless of ethnicity or religion.
- Emphasize that violence and terrorism are carried out by small groups or individuals, not by entire peoples
- Be alert for additional threats
- Utilize symbols to support community cohesion, such as police presence, the U.S. and State flags
- Honor survivors, rescuers, and the deceased
- Watch for signs of trauma in children, such as sleeplessness, nightmares, anxiety and misbehavior
- Delay major exams and projects until the trauma is resolved
- Remember to take time to calm and care for yourself
- Identify and use your personal coping skills
- Encourage students to identify their coping skills

Reference: Williams, M. B. (2004). How schools respond to traumatic events. In N. B. Webb (Ed.), *Mass Trauma and Violence: Helping Families and Children Cope*. New York: Guilford Press.