



St Benedict's Catholic Primary School – Applecross

Policy Statement

Crisis Management Plan

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Reviewed: 2016

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Crisis Response Team:

Principal: Darren McDonald
Assistant Principals: Ben Will, Michelle Christian
Social Worker: Stephanie Bolton

DEFINITION:

Crisis can be considered as any situation faced by staff or students that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional actions, which may have the potential to interfere with their ability to perform at the scene or later.

Crises tends to be far removed from normal experience, such as a sudden death or catastrophic event and the individual has little by way of guidelines based on past experience about how to deal with the event or the reaction to it. Remember that children have less experience to draw on than adults and usually have a restricted repertoire of coping responses.

Sense of control and self-efficacy are reduced. Children will be looking to those adults who usually provide support, guidance, direction and leadership to continue to fulfil these roles.

Problems can arise from a single highly traumatic event or from several less severe but emotionally taxing events spread over time.

Exposure to crises can trigger normal but strong emotional responses. These should decrease in duration and intensity over time. Appropriate support can minimize the duration and intensity of such reactions. Some individuals may require more support over a longer time than others. This applies to both students and staff.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The Crisis Response Team (CRT) is responsible for:

- The implementation of all procedures within the school to a crisis involving a student or other members of the school community.
- CRT is responsible for coordination of and liaison with all outside agencies eg. Police, counselling, etc.
- Media Liaison – The Principal alone has the responsibility of liaising with the media.

A trauma has an effect on the whole school community. The focus of this document is to help the school community deal with trauma, assign clearly various roles and responsibilities and assist the school to function and return to “normal” as soon as possible.

PURPOSE:

- To return to 'normal operations' within the school.
- To enable the collective process of grieving by staff and students.
- To enable students to achieve a better understanding of death and dying in a supportive and controlled environment.
- To ensure staff, students and the wider community have the appropriate/necessary support following the event.
- To ensure correct procedures are known and followed for the best outcomes regarding safety, mental and emotional wellbeing.

GUIDELINES:

Actions to be taken when news of a tragic or traumatic event is received in concerns to a member of the school community:

- a) Staff member receiving the news immediately contacts the Principal or, if unavailable, another member of the CRT. The Principal arranges for all members of the CRT to be informed.
- b) The CRT meets as soon as possible (that same evening or the next morning before school) to allocate tasks for each member and decide on the action to be taken by the School.

Areas to be considered:

- Liaison with parents and family
 - Appropriate manner of contact with the affected family
 - Identifying those members of the school community most closely involved
 - Arrangements for informing appropriate staff and students and other organisations associated with the school
 - The Principal will disseminate information to staff, students and parents.
1. The Principal should convene a special staff meeting at the earliest possible time.
 2. The community shall receive communication regarding the event as is appropriate on a case-by-case basis. This will come in the form of a SEQTA SMS message or email, failing this emails will be disseminated through nominated bulk mailing lists or via class parents.
 3. The Principal shall provide guidelines about handling student reactions and the referral of distressed members of the School.
 4. The CRT will reconvene on the same day to consider On-going support for the affected members of the St Benedict's Community and make arrangements for the next week.
 5. The Principal or designated member of the CRT will keep staff informed of further arrangements.
 6. **Follow-up** – The Principal should conduct a one week and then one month follow up meeting with the CRT to ensure that all actions have been followed and to provide additional support and assistance to any member in need.
 7. Review the Response Plan for future incidents.

CRITICAL AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT REPORTING

Registration Standard regarding the Management, Recording and reporting of Critical and Emergency Incidents in Schools.

A crucial requirement for meeting this standard is that 'the Director General of the Department of Education Services (DES) is notified of any critical and/or emergency school incidents as soon as is practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of the incident'.

For Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) schools, all notifications to the Director General of DES are to be made by the Executive Director, CEWA. Principals are required to fill out a Critical and Emergency Incident report form and email it to ecr@cathednet.wa.edu.au or their school's Employment and Community Relations Consultant.

The department of education Services recently changed the Critical and Emergency Incident report form. The new form is available here:

http://www.des.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/nongovernmentalschools/info-ings/critical_incidents/Documents/Critical%20and%20Emergency%20Incident%20Notification%20Form.pdf

The new form has new headings and requests adding additional information that the original form did not.

The new form has new headings and requests additional information that the original form did not.

Importantly, the first part of the new form requires you to identify the type of incident, from one or more of the following categories:

1. Death, or life-threatening injury, of a student or staff member at school, or following an incident that occurred at the school or through a related school-based activity or circumstance;
2. Circumstances that pose a critical risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of one or more students or staff;
3. Receipt of an allegation of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, against a student by a staff member or student or other person, whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past;
4. Issuing a formal warning to a staff member or ceasing the employment of a staff member for a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct suspected to be grooming behaviour;
5. Incidents requiring school closure, lockdown, or reduction of number of students or staff attending.

If your Critical and Emergency incident does not fall within one of the five categories you may not need to report it.

If you are unsure of the process or have any questions please contact your Employment and Community Relations Consultant for advice.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM TASKS

Principal

Tasks:

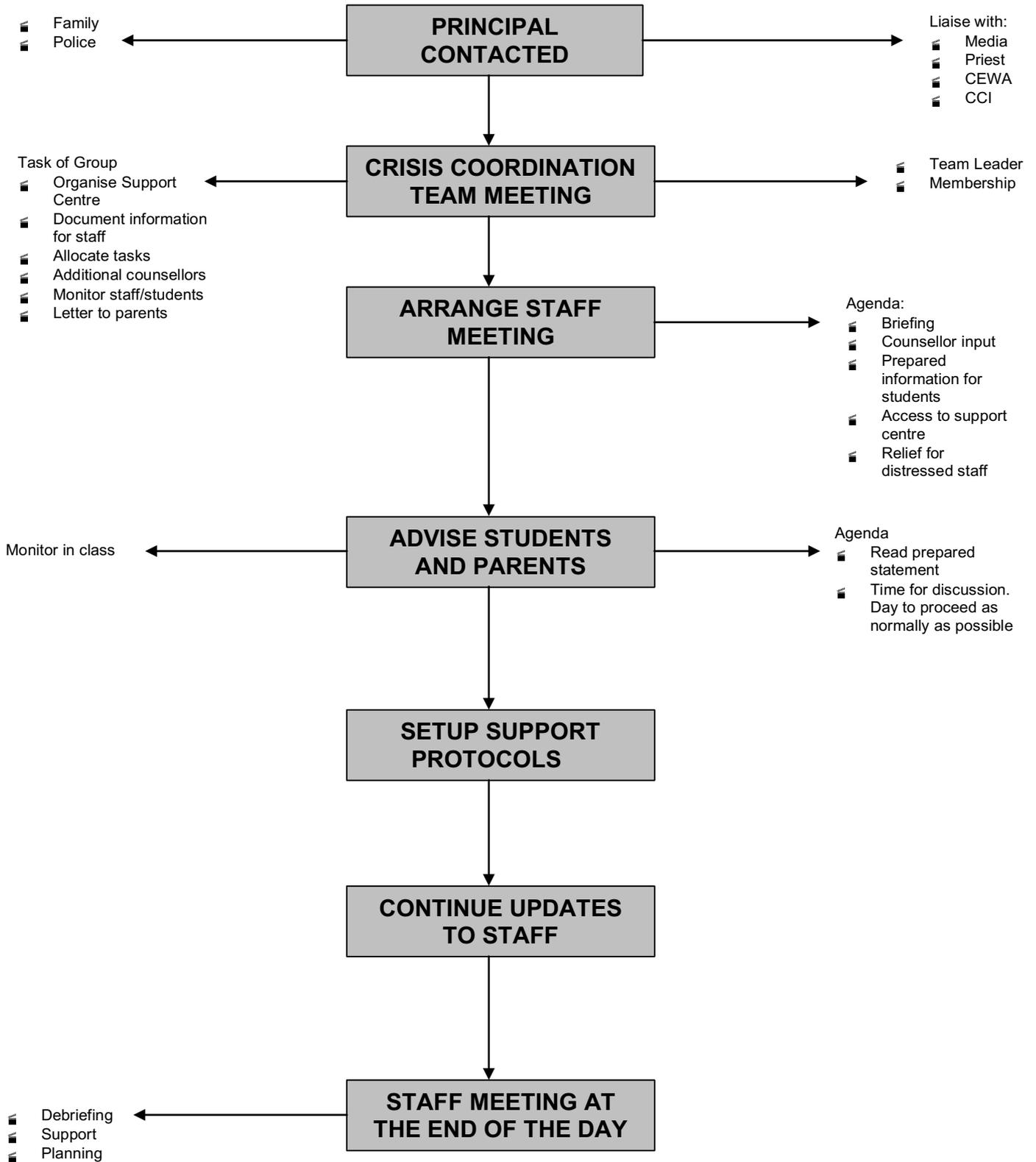
- Brief staff
- Provide pastoral support for staff/children/community
- Update staff (continued)
- Liaise with families/priest/CEWA
- Liaise with media
- Liaise closely and brief other members of the CRT as to what information is to be passed on
- Contact CCI

Other Team Members:

Tasks:

- Set up support protocols
- Document information for staff
- Document information for parents and students
- Liaise with psychologists re: counselling sessions for students, staff and community members
- Monitor staff/student reactions
- Provide pastoral support for staff
- Provide/organise relief if necessary
- Document and provide ongoing information to School Community if required.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING



CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Task Checklist

Immediate to do within the first 24 hours:

- Gather information
- Decide on level of response required
- Call together the school Crisis Response Team
- Enact the school Crisis Management Plan
- Find out the facts from police and when the school can release these
- Has contact been made with the families of the victims? Arrange to visit as soon as possible.
- Prepare or adapt information for release to groups in the school community
- Inform staff
- Decide on means of information transfer to students
- Support distressed staff
- Give staff guidelines on the role that they can play with the students
- Try to ensure that a telephone line is kept free for essential calls
- Decide how the school will handle enquiries
- Ensure that the Registrar has an accurate written statement for incoming calls
- Decide how media enquiries will be handled
- Start keeping a record of events
- Provide support facilities for distressed students. Decide who will deal with most affected students
- Decide whether outside agencies need to be contacted
- Establish a support centre within the school and ensure it is staffed at all times
- Check for siblings outside St Benedict's School
- Decide whether other schools need to be contacted
- Decide whether parental permission is required for some kinds of information release
- Ensure that the most critically involved personnel have support
- Make arrangements for staff who may want to stay after school
- Ensure arrangements have been made for parents who call at the school.
- Decide who will attend to the victim's desk/personal belongings.
- Decide whether debriefing is required for the most critically involved school personnel
- Decide on the follow-up for the next day
- Arrange relief teaching if required
- Arrange that the Crisis Response Team meet at the end of the day

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Task Checklist

Medium Term

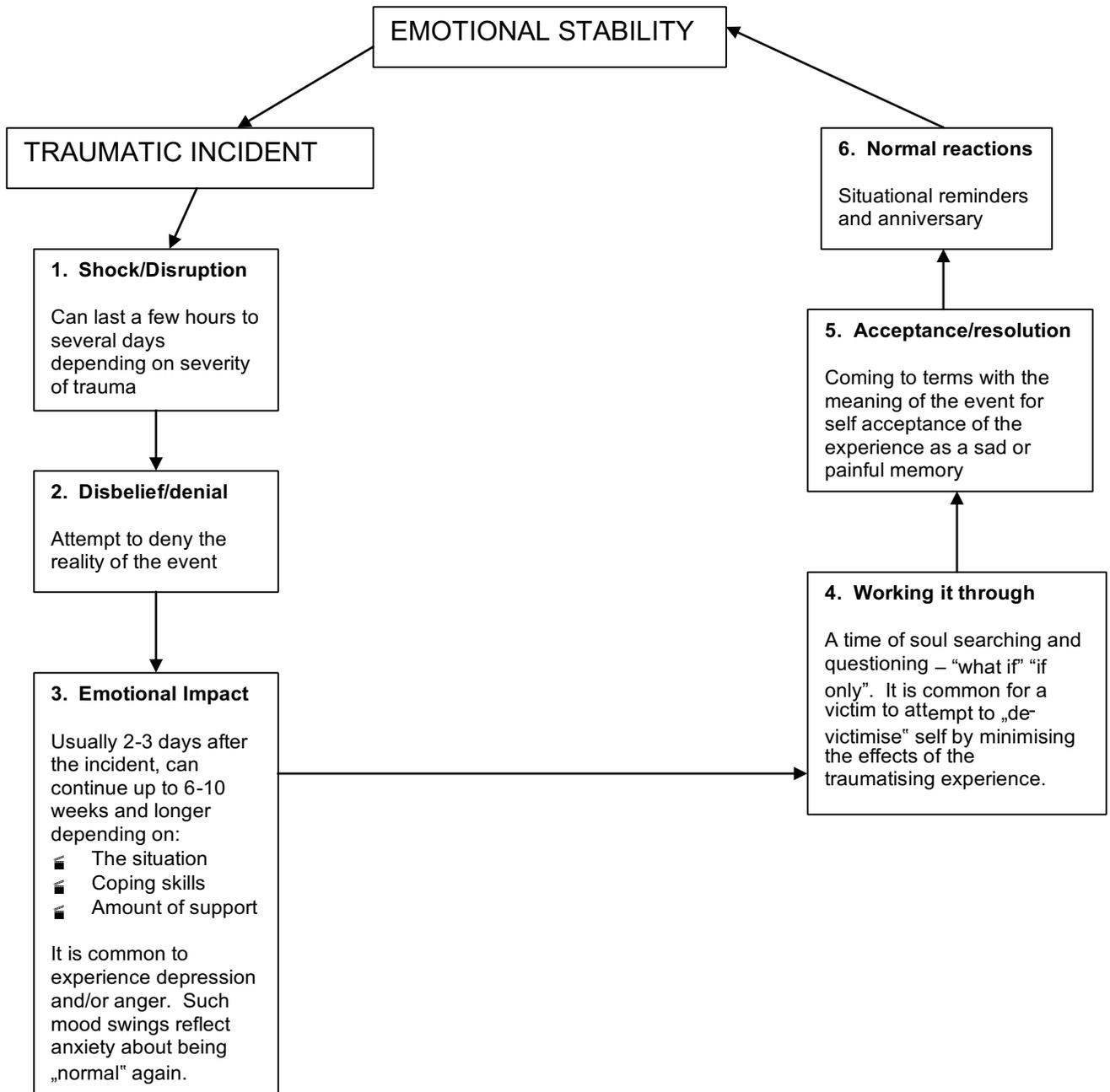
- Decide who will attend the funeral
- Decide whether the school will hold its own memorial service or create a memorial to the victims
- Remember that there may be deaths subsequent to the initial fatalities
- Decide whether debriefing is required for the most critically involved school personnel
- Decide on follow-up for the next week
- Continue to monitor reactions within the school community and provide support
- Return the school as far as possible to the regular routine
- Update staff and students with new information
- Consider giving advice to staff, students and parents on media enquiries
- Keep parents informed
- Consider preparations of school community for funeral and burial arrangements
- Maintain contact and support to families of victims
- Monitor those in care giver roles
- Keep note of expressions of sympathy, condolences, offers of help for later response
- Arrange relief teachers if required.

Long Term

- Decide whether the school will hold a memorial service or create a memorial to the victims
- Consider or implement debriefing for the critically involved school personnel
- Consider follow-up for the most affected/at risk students in reasonable time after the event.
- Consider what the school will do to mark the anniversary date. Be aware of unexpected anniversary dates e.g. Birthdays of victims
- A coronial inquest may take place some considerable time after the event. Students and staff may need time spent to understand the process. The inquest may cause some re-living of the events with consequent renewed distress.
- Establish when the Crisis Response Team will reconvene to review the response made and make any necessary amendments to the Crisis Management Plan.
- Continue to liaise with outside agencies.
- If liability is an issue, be prepared for legal proceedings.
- Remember that those who have had special roles to play may also need attention given to their well being. It may also be helpful to publicly acknowledge those who have taken on a task outside their usual responsibilities.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Response and Recovery Cycle



From:- Traumatic Incidents Affecting Schools. Guidance and Counselling Services, Department of Education, Queensland. 1990

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Children's Reactions to Traumatic Events

Individuals will react differently to the same experience. The response is determined by many factors. Some responses can be considered as common to particular age groups.

When a death or a significant loss occurs (and this can be of material possessions), the process of grieving has added complications. The shock of the trauma must be dealt with before grieving can begin in most instances.

In general, children of all ages show as their most frequent symptoms of trauma, the following:

- Disturbed pattern of sleeping
- Nightmares and vivid dreams often reliving the actual event
- Fears around normal everyday occurrences
- Fear of future events
- Loss of interest in school and lower academic achievement
- Loss of sense of personal responsibility including simple things like hygiene

Children in Pre-school and Early Primary

Regressive

- Crying
- Thumb sucking
- Bed-wetting
- Infantile language
- Fears

Emotional/behavioural

- Clinging
- Irritable
- Disobedient/oppositional
- Aggressive
- Disturbed pattern of activity
- Repeated talking about the event

Physiological

- Sleep disturbance in both pattern and duration
- Change to eating patterns
- Toileting problems: - change to bowel/bladder patterns

Children in Middle and Upper Primary

Regressive

- Competition with brothers or sisters particularly for parental attention
- Clinging/anxiety over separation
- Crying
- Re-emergence of discarded behaviour patterns

Emotional/behavioural

- School refusal
- Social withdrawal, refusing to go out of the house, remaining in bedroom
- Disturbed pattern of activity
- Irritable
- Disobedient/oppositional
- Poor concentration and attention
- Lower achievement levels
- Sadness/emotionally labile/mood swings
- Repetitive play concerning incident
- Overt competition with siblings and peers
- Fears

Physiological

- Headaches
- Pains
- Nausea
- Sleep disturbance in both pattern and duration
- Itching
- Visual difficulties

Helping Younger Children at School after a Trauma

Children need security and stability. Fears underlie much of the behaviour change seen after a trauma. Familiar behaviour may substitute for feelings/behaviour that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable e.g. laughing when feeling sad or worried. Teachers can assist children to manage these intense feelings at a time when parents may be struggling with their own emotional reaction.

- Listen when the child wants to talk and answer only the question asked.
- Show the child you care so as to maintain their trust.
- Give frequent reassurance. Be aware that children may be anxious on separating from parents.
- Allow children to be active and noisy as a way of expressing feelings.
- Look out for changed behaviour that may be aggressive or destructive.
- Use plain language when talking about death.
- If out of character persists for more than a month or so, or the child appears to be blaming themselves for the incident, then specialised intervention may be required and it is advised to discuss this with the parents.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Helping Children in Middle/Upper Primary School after a Trauma

Children need security and stability. Fears underlie much of the behaviour change seen after a trauma. Familiar behaviour may substitute for feelings/behaviour that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable e.g. laughing when feeling sad or worried. Teachers can assist children to manage these intense feelings at a time when parents may be struggling with their own emotional reaction.

Between the ages of 7 and 10 most children come to an understanding of the finality of death and become increasingly interested in what happens after death. The concept of death remains immature and it should be recognised that children will retain some unusual notions on what it means to be dead. At this age, death is generally seen as something that happens to other people, to older people.

- Provide a stable environment to assist adaptation to trauma. Re-establish routines.
- Discuss what happened in the trauma to allow expression of feelings. Look for positive aspects. Don't feel that you have to hide your personal feelings and emotions. Children will feel less isolated if they see others sharing their emotions. If individual children have misconceptions/misinformation about the incident (particularly in relation to death) consult with the parents before correcting this.
- Use creative activities to look at the event. Younger children will use play. Older children can benefit from using art, music or drama to express their feelings. This should be done cautiously and it may be wise to seek professional advice on these interventions.
- Group activities can be especially useful in allowing children to regain a sense of control and security
- Allow opportunity for creative play and encourage re-enactment of the incident. Expressing feelings through play make it less likely that the children will relive the trauma internally.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Taking Care of Yourself

Being involved in helping people after an event may be traumatising for teachers, principals and other school staff. Involvement does not need to be direct for a reaction to occur. Recognise that those in helping roles may experience some of the common reactions to trauma. To take care of the children in our school, it is essential that you take time to care for yourself.

Hyperarousal (often described as feeling “switched on” or “like a coiled spring”) is a common response. This can lead to over-reaction, anxiety, disorganised thinking and impaired memory; sleep disturbance and difficulty in managing everyday tasks. Sometimes the response is quite different with individual coping mechanisms complicating the picture. Remember that trauma response is a normal reaction to an abnormal event.

Try to:

- Rest a bit more, even if you don't sleep
- Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible
- Eat regularly with a well balanced diet. Complex carbohydrates (such as pasta) which are slow to metabolise, may slow down the arousal rate
- Regular physical exercise provides a good outlet for the physical effects of stress. After strenuous exercise, remember to cool-down and use relaxation activities
- Increase time with friends
- Talk to people you trust
- Let those who are important to you, talk about their feelings
- Share information on reactions to trauma, how to be supportive, with family and friends so they can help you
- Use support networks at school and at home
- Don't bottle things up
- Be open to the option of counselling or other specialised support

Following a trauma, those persons involved are more vulnerable to accidents and physical illness, so take care and allow time for relaxation. If feelings persist for more than one month, or you feel you cannot deal with your emotions, or your reactions are seriously interfering with your everyday life, then it is important to seek assistance.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Media Contact

With advances in communication technology, the media often have early notice of a traumatic event. There can be no denying that such events are newsworthy but media representation can be intrusive and can cause a number of problems in terms of management and response. Problems include:

- Insensitive media coverage may further traumatise victims through being repeatedly exposed to the event
- Issues may be simplified and distorted. Victims may then do the same to their problems and emotions feeling that these are not sufficiently serious to warrant seeking timely help.
- Events may be exaggerated, participants glorified or vilified
- Information given may be misrepresented
- Increased demand on already pressured organisational resources

A crucial part of the Crisis Management Plan is to recognise that the media can play a positive role in relation to a number of issues. Areas that can be helpful include:

- Information on reactions to trauma in relation to different victim groups
- Details of support services and where they can be reached
- Rapid dissemination of information relating to, for example, evacuation procedures, where children have been moved and emergency contact may help in the reduction in the number of enquiries from the community.

Remember that other agencies, notably the police, will also have a role in media liaison. There may be a need for some negotiation over how such contacts can be managed so as to ensure consistency of content.

Media Guidelines

In event of a trauma, the following will take place when talking to the media:

- The Principal will be the one who talks to the media
- The Principal will address the community to remind them that all media contact regarding the event including the use of social media will be the responsibility of the Principal. No other person or party should approach the media or interact with social media regarding the event. This will be handled on a case by case basis.
- Prepare a press release with updates if required
- Insist on dealing with the media directly on how the event will be covered
- Set "ground rules" for interaction. Determine whether the media can enter the school grounds, who they can and can not interview

Remember that journalists are just doing their job. Information can be obtained from other sources such as the police. Being cooperative, while setting clear boundaries, can stifle

rumour and speculation. Try to anticipate the information that the media might want e.g. the number effected, the extent of the injury or damage, response and support facility.

Do:

- Advise school personnel of media procedure
- Advise students of the media procedure and where they stand if approached for an interview. Parents should also be told of the advice given to students
- Protect confidential information (check identity if the nature of the question seems inappropriate)
- Consult with bereaved families to assure them that confidential information is being protected
- Ensure consistency of information.
- Seek police advice
- Cooperate with the media and seek their cooperation.

Don't:

- Give out personal information
- Supply photographs of the victims
- Speculate or give credence to unfounded theory
- Create heroes or glorify the deceased
- Forget that media interest will extend beyond the event. Funerals, memorial services and coronial enquiry will all receive attention.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Gathering Information on an Incident:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Recorded by: _____

What happened

Who was involved

Where

When

Who is reporting

Who witnessed the event

Who knows about the incident

Have emergency services been contacted Y/N

Are there police officers on the scene? Y/N

Name of attending officer _____

What is known on extent of injuries or deaths

Have any other actions been taken

Have parents been contacted?



Telephone contact numbers:

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Crisis response team called together

Date: _____ Time: _____

Crisis management plan enacted:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Signed: _____