



Now What???

Another Shooting Massacre at Another School...

Reactions and Healing

A tragedy cannot be fixed; but it can be healed. Yet healing takes time. That time can be short for some and very long for others, but most people do eventually heal from even the worst events. Some even go on to turn their tragedies into activism, art, education, or a personal mission of human service. People react to tragedy differently depending upon countless features of psychology, neurology, experience, age, gender, culture, education, and proximity to the event. Some people may react very differently than you do. You may hear some say it didn't bother them with a comment like "these things happen." It may surprise and shock you to hear political comments that are far from your own opinions. Others may be heartbroken, terrified, confused, angry, and depressed or worse. Someone you know may have already been a victim of a previous tragedy and this newest incident re-triggers them. Fear is a powerful force, and a shooting in a school involving the murder of innocent children and/or teachers, is more than fearful; it is the most extreme form of emotional terrorism. The full range of human emotions will be triggered by such tragedy.

Schools and Preparations

There is an assumption that schools were historically safe places for children. That has never been true. Think about it: fire drills, earthquake drills, duck and cover drills, tsunami drills, and the like. School administrators have always considered the challenges of keeping children safe while in their care. Now there is this new deadly risk to be taken seriously, but not with paranoia. Schools are preparing children and teachers the best they can for the unlikely event of an active shooter.

Statistics suggest that you are safer than you may think after seeing a tragedy in the media. Seeing an airplane crash on the news makes us fear for our own traveling safety more than we ordinarily might. In the same way, we now wonder about being safe at schools. And it makes complete sense to prepare ourselves for even the remote possibility that anyone is at risk. In fact, research

shows that education, and practicing emergency drills, increases long-term resiliency in the unlikely event of a serious incident.

It's like having a fire extinguisher. It's there for a reason. But it isn't appropriate to carry one around under your arm at all times "just in case a fire breaks out!" You have an extinguisher, know where it is and how to use it, and will do so if needed. You are prepared for that potential but can move on with your day.

It may help if you put that perspective into your thinking and sharing with your colleagues and students. We tell them to wear seat belts, get immunizations, brush their teeth and not to use drugs. We have no control over accidents, disease, tooth decay, or addiction. But we continue to do our best to educate, protect, and move on to the next lesson plan. Denial is not a useful tool in this fast-paced information age. Use these incidents to teach, prepare, and practice what to do if there is a fire, an earthquake, a tsunami, or active shooter. Then move on. If someone can't move on over a reasonable period of time, that may be a different discussion.

Resources

Anyone can Google massive information and resources about active shooters, or violence management in schools. But what can support you today? How do you talk to your family, friends, colleagues and students about these or other heinous events? What is the right approach? Your administration policies will guide you. And, on your own, we wanted to remind you that you can make use of your free and available EAP benefit. You don't need to get pre-approval and can call your local EAP to schedule a free, confidential, one-on-one coaching or counseling session to talk-story, get some tips on managing concerns you have, or just to have another method to navigate your feelings.

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