

# Recovery Tools, Checklists & Resources *Handouts for Adult Family Members*

## How Parents Can Help *Family Resources*

Much of the recovery work involving a crisis can be facilitated by parents. The school may meet with parents in small groups and provide information as to what to look for and how they can help their children. Some parents may need individual help before they are ready to help their children. The school may provide opportunities for group discussions in which parents can share their responses and worries.

### **Crisis and Children\***

When people experience a crisis, often family routines are disrupted, and parents face additional tasks and demands on their time. A crisis can affect the members of a family or of an entire community. Often it is hard for young children to understand what has happened during times of crisis. Some children may have completely confused views of the situation and may need your continued guidance and understanding through the experience. How you help your own children work through their difficult times may have a lasting effect.

Children can experience the same intense feelings that adults feel about a crisis. This is a normal reaction. Some children may show their feelings in a direct and immediate fashion, while others will wait until a later time.

Most children will be confused by any sudden interruptions to their routines. Crisis situations are difficult for both children and adults.

Each child in a family may react differently to crises. Following a crisis, some children may:

- Become more active and restless
- Become upset easily crying and whining
- Become withdrawn or depressed
- Feel afraid at night or when alone

### **Helping Your Child After a Crisis\*\***

Children may be especially upset and express feelings about the crisis. These reactions are normal and usually will not last long. Listed below are some behaviors you may see in your children:

- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone
  - Clinging to parents, fear of strangers
  - Worry
  - Increase in immature behaviors
  - Not wanting to go to school
  - Changes in eating/sleeping behaviors
  - Increase in either aggressive behavior or shyness
  - Bed wetting or thumb sucking
  - Persistent nightmares
  - Headaches or other physical complaints
- The following actions may help your child:
- Talk with your child about his/her feelings about the crisis. Share your feelings, too.
  - Talk about what happened. Give your child information he/she can understand.
  - Reassure your child that you are safe and together. You may need to repeat this reassurance often.



- Hold and touch your child often.
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime.
- Maintain normal schedules and rules as much as possible.
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over his/her experiences.
- If you feel your child is having problems at school, talk to his/her teacher so you can work together to help your child.

Usually a child's emotional response to a crisis will not last long, but some problems may be present or recur for many months afterward.

Your school may assist you in locating mental health resources in the community if necessary.

*Please re-read this sheet from time to time in the coming months.*

*\*Adapted with permission from the Los Angeles Unified School District*

*\*\*Reprinted with permission from the California Department of Mental Health*



## **The Role for Caring Adults after a School or Community Tragedy**

After a tragic incident in another community or around the country, adults often ask how best to be helpful to their children. These suggestions are offered to help children who may express fears or concerns after such an event.

### **Listen**

Adults should provide opportunity for and encourage children to express their concerns and fears. Listen for misconceptions or inaccurate information, and share *facts*, as developmentally appropriate. Use this opportunity to validate a child's feelings and give extra reassurance, support & encouragement. Schools ARE safe and caring places for children and staff. Reassure children that our schools have measures to protect their safety.

### **Protect**

Adults and schools provide needed structure, stability, and predictability for children. That is why we encourage children to come to school and return to normal routines as soon as they are able. Monitor children's exposure to media coverage to protect them from secondary trauma.

### **Connect**

Check-in with children on a regular basis. Watch for children who may have individual or on-going needs based on past trauma experiences or difficulty coping after a period of time. Connect with families and/or refer to mental health or counseling staff for follow up, as needed.

### **Model**

Adults can demonstrate calm behavior and healthy coping skills. Maintain level emotions and reactions to children, and help them achieve balance.

### **Teach**

Acknowledge the normal reactions to stress, trauma, and grief. Those affected may have difficulty sleeping, re-experience the event, have up and down emotions, display rigid thinking, exhibit regressive behavior and over-react to little things and/or have difficulty remembering. Teach about healthy coping responses, as needed.

### **Problem-solve**

Help children problem solve how to go to school every day, how to stay in school, and how to do well. Contact your child's school with individual or on-going needs. The school can help you link with needed resources.

If you have additional questions or needs, please contact your child's school or the CSSRC.

Adapted from:

Schreiber, M., Wong, M., and Schonfeld, D. (2006). Listen, Protect, and Connect. Retrieved April 20, 2010 from [http://www.read.gov/kids\\_downloads/PFA\\_SchoolCrisis.pdf](http://www.read.gov/kids_downloads/PFA_SchoolCrisis.pdf)

Wong, M. (2006, September). Bereavement, Loss & Grief. Workshop conducted at the Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grant meeting of the US Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools.

**Colorado School Safety Resource Center**

*Supporting Safe and Positive Colorado Schools*

700 Kipling Street #1000, Denver, CO 80215 [www.safeschools.state.co.us](http://www.safeschools.state.co.us) Tel: 303-239-4435



# Recovery Tools, Checklists & Resources

## Handouts for Adult Family Members

### After a Crisis Family Resources

Having just experienced the shock and pain of a crisis, you will be busy for the next few days or weeks. Caring for your immediate needs may occupy the majority of your time. As the immediate reaction wears off, you will start to rebuild and put your life back together. We may all experience some normal reactions as a result of the crisis.

Generally, these feelings do not last long, but it is common to feel let down and resentful many months after the event. Some feelings or responses may not appear until weeks or months after the incident. Common responses are:

- Irritability/anger
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares
- Sadness
- Headaches or nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Lack of concentration
- Increased alcohol or other drug consumption
- Talking about your experiences. Sharing your feelings will help you feel better about what happened.
- Taking time off from cares, worries, and home repairs. Taking time for recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby. Getting away from home for a day or spending a few hours with close friends can help.
- Paying attention to your health, eating a balanced diet, and getting adequate sleep. Relaxation exercises may help if you have difficulty sleeping.
- Preparing for possible emergencies to help lessen feelings of helplessness and to bring peace of mind.
- Rebuilding personal relationships in addition to repairing other aspects of your life. Couples should make time to be alone together, both to talk and to have fun.

Many crisis victims and survivors will have at least one of these responses. Acknowledging your feelings and stress is the first step in feeling better. Other helpful things to do include:

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue, you may wish to contact a mental health community resource.

*Please reread this sheet over the next few weeks and months. Be aware of your feelings and share them with others as this is an important part of recovery and feeling normal again.*

*Reprinted with permission from the California Department of Mental Health.*



## Possible Manifestations of Grief in Youth

# Grief in Youth

Behavioral/Social	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regressive behaviors (returning to a behavior from an earlier period) (i.e., bed wetting, thumb sucking, clinging, tantrums)</li> <li>▶ Aggressive behaviors (hitting, demanding)</li> <li>▶ Rebellious/defiant behaviors</li> <li>▶ Withdrawal/passivity</li> <li>▶ Hyperactivity</li> <li>▶ Temporary assumption of a new role or personality (often related to changes in a family unit)</li> <li>▶ Increased need for reassurance (i.e., clinging and not wanting to initiate or leave home)</li> <li>▶ Hoarding (food, toys, etc.)</li> <li>▶ Changes in eating patterns (more or less)</li> <li>▶ Lowered grades (due to difficulty in concentration and distraction)</li> <li>▶ "Perfect" child syndrome</li> <li>▶ "Bad" child syndrome</li> <li>▶ Drug use increase</li> <li>▶ Sexual promiscuity</li> <li>▶ Reckless or self-destructive behavior</li> <li>▶ Crying</li> <li>▶ Nonstop talking/attention getting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Self blame and guilt                      "I caused it to happen"                      "I could have prevented it"</li> <li>▶ Fear                      "Who will take care of me?"                      "Will it happen to me too?"                      "Will I have to pay the price...Will God punish me?"</li> <li>Fear of the dark, going to sleep, new places and experiences</li> <li>▶ Numbness</li> <li>▶ Withdrawn</li> <li>▶ Demanding</li> <li>▶ Helpless/hopeless</li> <li>▶ Despair</li> <li>▶ Yearning and pining</li> <li>▶ Un-accepting</li> <li>▶ Pensive</li> <li>▶ Anger</li> <li>▶ Anger disguised as general irritation</li> <li>▶ Sadness</li> <li>▶ Anxious</li> <li>▶ Bored</li> <li>▶ Apathy</li> </ul>

*Possible Manifestations of Grief in Youth, continued*

Physical
▶ Changes in appetite
▶ Sleep disturbances or changes
▶ Bowel and bladder disturbances/ changes
▶ Temporary slowing of reactions
▶ Headaches
▶ Stomach aches
▶ Rashes
▶ Breathing disturbances
▶ Exaggeration of allergies
▶ Increased number of colds and infections
▶ Symptoms associated with illness or injury of the deceased

Cognitive
▶ Impaired self-esteem
▶ Disturbances in cognitive functioning (attention span deficit, hyperactivity)
▶ Exaggerations in "magical thinking"
▶ Loss-centered thinking
▶ Avoidance and denial of the loss
▶ Idealization of the past and/or the future
▶ Idealization (unrealistic thinking) related to the loss
▶ Increase in nightmares/dreams

# Mourner's Bill of Rights by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Though you should reach out to others as you do the work of mourning, you should not feel obligated to accept the unhelpful responses you may receive from some people. You are the one who is grieving, and as such, you have certain "rights" no one should try to take away from you. The following list is intended both to empower you to heal and to decide how others can and cannot help. This is not to discourage you from reaching out to others for help, but rather to assist you in distinguishing useful responses from hurtful ones.

- 1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.** No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell what you should or should not be feeling.
- 2. You have the right to talk about your grief.** Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief. If at times you don't feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.
- 3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.** Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.
- 4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.** Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.
- 5. You have the right to experience "grief bursts."** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.
- 6. You have the right to make use of ritual.** The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you the funeral or other healing rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.
- 7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.** If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.
- 8. You have the right to search for meaning.** You may find yourself asking "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.
- 9. You have the right to treasure your memories.** Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.
- 10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.** Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

Recovery  
Tools, Checklists & Resources  
The Grief Connection  
*School and Family Resources*

**The “Grief Connection”**

The Grief Connection is a network of groups and agencies that provide supportive services to those experiencing grief.

**American Cancer Society**

1-800-227-2345

**Cancer Support Group**

482-3328 – Poudre Valley Hospital  
Radiation/Oncology

**Argus Institute**

297-1242 – Free counseling relating to pet loss

**Connections**

(Help finding private therapists regardless of ability to pay)  
221-5551

**First Call**

(Larimer County information and referral agency)  
211

**Pathways Hospice**

663-3500

**Summitstone Health Partners**

494-9761

**Local Worship Centers**

(see phone directory)

**Make-A-Wish Foundation**

303-750-9474

**Alliance for Suicide Prevention  
of Larimer County**

482-2209

*In case of difficulty reaching the services above, call Pathways Hospice at 663-3500.*







## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

### YOUTH EDUCATION

Raising Awareness of Personal Power (RAPP)

A school-based education and prevention program in Middle and High Schools that teaches students about warning signs, coping skills and resources.

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Hope for Today

Training on depression, bipolar disorder and recognizing suicide warning signs.

Participants are provided with knowledge of how to respond to a person in crisis and are provided with available resources in the community.



ALLIANCE  
FOR SUICIDE  
PREVENTION

of Lacrimar County



## GRIEF SUPPORT

### HEARTBEAT SUPPORT GROUPS

A free, drop-in peer support group for individuals who are grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.

### YOU'RE NOT ALONE

People who are struggling with grief from the passing of a loved one by suicide and are in need of comfort, support, and acknowledgment that life is worth living afterwards are invited to join this monthly group.

### GRIEF CONNECTION

This newly created teleconference grief support group is for individuals experiencing grief after suicide are encouraged to join this self-discovery focused support group. We understand that every person grieves in their own way and we're here to support you.

Please go to our website at [allianceforsuicideprevention.org](http://allianceforsuicideprevention.org) to find out times and dates for these groups.



## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

### BEHAVIORAL WARNING SIGNS

- ...Sad often/unable to feel joy
- ...Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless
- ...Feeling irritable, angry, restless
- ...Feeling guilt and shame
- ...Fatigue and loss of energy
- ...Difficulty concentrating
- ...Decreased interest in activities
- ...Withdrawal/isolation
- ...Alcohol or drug use
- ...Severe mood swings

### VERBAL CLUES AND ACTIONS

- ...Talking or writing about suicide
- ...Giving away possessions
- ...Careless, high-risk behavior
- ...Making a suicide plan
- ...Gathering supplies to kill self
- ...Unexplained mood improvement

### ADDITIONAL RISK FACTORS

- ...Recent losses or major life changes
- ...Access to means
- ...Absence of support
- ...Past family attempts
- ...Family history of suicide



**EMERGENCY (24 HOURS)**



**ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION**

Police/Ambulance: 911

Suicide Hotline

1-800-273-TALK(8255)

Estes Park Medical Center

(970) 586-2317

McKee Medical Center

(970) 635-4071

Medical Center of the Rockies

(970) 495-8090

Poudre Valley Hospital

(970) 495-8090

**THERAPIST REFERRALS**

[www.healthinfosource.com](http://www.healthinfosource.com)

Connections (Fort Collins)

(970) 221-5551

Loveland Counseling Connections

(970) 461-8944

Our mission is to prevent suicide in Larimer County by raising awareness, educating and training youth and adults about depression and suicide, and providing resources and support to those who have been impacted.

**WAYS TO HELP**

1. Make a tax-deductible donation online at [allianceforsuicideprevention.org](http://allianceforsuicideprevention.org) or by mail at address below.
2. Become a volunteer. Fill out our volunteer form online and let us know what you are interested in doing.
3. Participate in one of our events.

**1100 Poudre River Drive Suite B  
Fort Collins Co 80524**



of Larimer County



Kayleanne Murdock  
Program Coordinator

1100 Poudre River Drive, Suite B  
Fort Collins, CO 80524  
970-482-2209  
[programcoordinator@suicideprevent.org](mailto:programcoordinator@suicideprevent.org)

For additional local resources,  
Call United Way by dialing 211.

**Alliance for Suicide Prevention  
970.482.2209  
[allianceforsuicideprevention.org](http://allianceforsuicideprevention.org)**

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