

Student's Reaction:

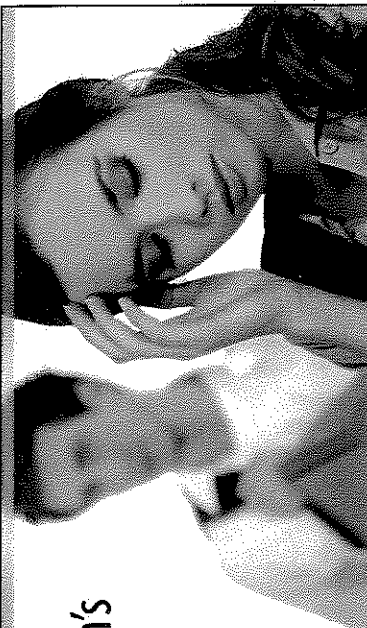
The initial reaction to a tragedy is one of shock, disbelief and denial. This is usually followed by a state of intense emotional turmoil during which students may express fear, anger, rage, confusion and sorrow. This is followed by exhaustion.

By the time you receive this brochure, your child has probably been informed of the tragedy and has already experienced some aspects of the initial reaction. What you will probably observe now are the long term reactions to the crisis. These will vary somewhat depending on the age of the student.

Middle School - At this age, some students may sensationalize the event. This tends to be a volatile age and intense emotional reactions, especially anger should be expected. Other students will engage in defiant humour to cover up their feelings. Decreased academic performance may occur. Acting out, behaviour and personality change may also occur.

High School - Teenagers often operate under the assumption of the immortality of youth. When someone young dies they undergo a crisis in their realization of vulnerability. This may challenge many of their belief systems and feelings about the meaning of life. Most teens are eventually able to incorporate this event into their lives and to make sense of it. However, others who have experienced additional recent losses may start to act out in self destructive ways (drinking, drugs, risk taking, etc.). All of the teens affected by the tragedy will go through the normal grieving process and most will emerge as stronger, more mature individuals.

Parent/Guardian's Guide Secondary Students' Reaction to Loss & Tragedy



Services Being Provided

Evaluation of Students' Needs: Trained professionals may meet with your child to determine the most appropriate intervention for him/her.

Debriefing - If your child has found out about the tragedy at school, support staff will be on hand to support them, explain the crisis and ensure safety.

Group Debriefing - As part of the district's crisis response plan, all students affected by a crisis will have an opportunity to discuss their reactions and feelings about this event once the initial shock has worn off. This usually occurs a day or two after the tragedy. This is done in an age-appropriate way. Students may have an opportunity to participate in small group debriefing sessions. Participation in discussions is encouraged but is voluntary in nature.

Individual Debriefing/Counseling - A number of counsellors will be available to provide individual debriefing/counseling for students who want to talk to someone individually. The focus of the counselling is on the tragic event and the student's reaction to it.

Follow-up - When necessary, selected groups of students may meet as a group on a number of occasions to assist them in dealing with their grief. In addition, teachers have been encouraged to allow for special activities and discussions in class. The curriculum may be adjusted for a short time during the grieving period. Parents/guardians will be contacted for students who the school feels are particularly at risk. If you have concerns about your child's reaction, please contact your child's teacher and/or guidance counsellor. Please contact the school if you do not want your child to receive this type of service.