

# Welcome to Session 3



## When School Starts Back: Helping Students Cope with Crisis and Loss During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Session Guide:

- You are muted and your video is turned off.
- Please enter your questions to the host or presenters in the Q&A window only.
- Use the Chat to talk with other people in the session and share resources.



# Zoom Guide

The image shows a Zoom Webinar interface with several annotated components:

- Zoom Webinar Header:** Includes "Zoom Webinar", "You are viewing David Terry's screen", and "View Options".
- Session View Controls:** "Click here to maximize your session view" and "Enter Full Screen".
- Main Content:** TTC Technology Transfer Centers logo, "Thank you for joining us today!", and "You will not be on video during today's session".
- Audio Settings:** "Select a Speaker" menu with options: "Speakers (Realtek(R) Audio)", "Same as System", "Test Speaker & Microphone...", "Leave Computer Audio", and "Audio Settings...". A callout says "Click Here to adjust your audio settings".
- Question and Answer Panel:** A window titled "Question and Answer" with tabs for "All questions (1)" and "My questions (1)". It shows a test question: "This is a test question!". A callout explains: "You can use the Q&A feature to ask questions of the host and presenters. These questions can receive text or live responses. To begin asking a question use the field below. You can see a test question above." Another callout points to the tabs: "You can switch between questions you've asked and those asked by others using these buttons." A text input field at the bottom says "Type your question here...".
- Zoom Webinar Chat:** A chat window on the right with a callout: "The chat feature will allow you to talk with other people in today's webinar." It shows a message: "To: All panelists" and a note: "Your text can only be seen by panelists".
- Bottom Toolbar:** Includes "Audio Settings", "Chat", "Raise Hand", "Q&A", "Click here to leave the session", and "Leave".

# When School Starts Back: Helping students cope with crisis and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic



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# Outline

- Psychological first aid
- Common reactions to a crisis
- Helping children cope with the pandemic
- Supporting grieving students
- Coalition to Support Grieving Students

# Psychological First Aid

- Provide broadly to those impacted
- Supportive services to promote normative coping and accelerate natural healing process
- All adults should understand likely reactions and how to help children cope



***Anyone that interacts with children can be a potential source of assistance and support – if unprepared, they can be a source of further distress.***

# PFA Actions

*source: American Red Cross*

Observation or  
Awareness

Make a  
Connection

Help People Feel  
Comfortable and  
at Ease

Be Kind, Calm, &  
Compassionate

Assist with  
Basic Needs

Listen

Give Realistic  
Reassurance

Encourage  
Good Coping

Help People  
Connect

Give Accurate  
and Timely  
Information

Suggest a  
Referral  
Resource

End the  
Conversation

# Watch your media consumption

- Make sure it is a healthy diet; don't consume too much
- Keep informed through focused/periodic attention to trusted sources of information
- If you aren't getting reassured or learning practical actions to take, then disconnect from media
- Limit amount of media exposure – this is a good time to unplug and connect instead with children and family

# Potential Symptoms of Adjustment Reactions

Fears & Anxiety;  
School  
Avoidance

Sleep problems;  
Change in  
Appetite

Difficulties with  
Concentration &  
Academic  
Performance

Sadness &  
Depression

Anger &  
Irritability;  
Distrust &  
Suspiciousness

Alcohol & Other  
Substance Use

Physical  
Symptoms

Grief

Guilt

# Talking with and supporting children

- Don't pretend everything is OK – children pick up when parents/adults are not genuine and honest
- Children may pick up on concerns primarily of adults
- Provide appropriate reassurance, but don't give false reassurance
- Find out individual child's fears, concerns, skepticism
- Don't tell students that they shouldn't be worried; help them learn to deal with their uncertainty and fear
- Include positive information; present a hopeful perspective

# Strategies for dealing with distress

- Reading or hobbies that promote healthy distraction
- Journaling, blogging, art, music to promote expressions of feelings
- Exercise, yoga
- Appropriate use of respectful humor
- Relaxation techniques, mindfulness
- Help children identify steps they can take personally to protect their own health and to help others

# Some children may need more assistance

- The pandemic and discussion about the impact on families may remind children of other difficulties – events in the past, ongoing challenges, or concerns about future losses or crises
- Students who were anxious or depressed before the pandemic will likely need more support
- Children may need to focus first on their own needs before they are able to think of needs of others; try not to make them feel guilty for thinking about how this crisis impacts them personally

# What you are doing is of value

- Just because we don't know everything, doesn't mean we know nothing of value
- You know strategies that have helped in the past to decrease distress – try them now
- Reach out to colleagues/resources in school district and community when more is critically needed
- Celebrate positive contributions you make
- Set reasonable expectations
- The curriculum has changed – teaching students how to cope → helping them learn life skills that will make them more resilient

# Being with someone in distress

- Do not try to “cheer up” survivors
- Do not encourage to be strong or cover emotions
- Express feelings and demonstrate empathy
- Avoid statements such as: “I know exactly what you are going through” (you can’t), “You must be angry” (don’t tell person how to feel), “Both my parents died when I was your age” (don’t compete for sympathy)
- Allow child/family to be upset while suspending judgment – intervene only when safety/health is concern

# Addressing cultural diversity

- Some people are worried they will say or do the wrong thing because they feel ill informed about another culture
- Although there are differences in cultural practices, the fundamental experience of grief is universal
- When we recognize that there is a range of ways to experience and express grief, we can explore ways to bridge cultural differences in order to help grieving children and families

# Supporting children of a different culture

- Ask questions when you are unsure what would be most helpful for a family or individual
- Assumptions may result in stereotypes that cloud our perceptions and make us miss opportunities to be helpful
- Approach the family with an open mind and heart
- Help families identify and communicate what is important to them about cultural practices; work with them to find solutions and compromises when realities require modifications in cultural practices

# Initiating the conversation

- Express concern
- Be genuine
- Invite conversation
- Listen and observe
- Limit personal sharing
- Offer practical advice
- Offer reassurance without minimizing concerns
- Maintain contact

# Children's guilt

- Young children tend to be:
  - Egocentric
  - Have limited understanding of cause of death
    - Magical thinking
- Results in guilt
  - Reassure children of lack of responsibility

# Academic accommodations

- It is common for students to experience temporary academic challenges after a death; pre-existing learning challenges often become worse
- Offer academic support proactively – don't wait for academic challenges to become academic failure
- Change an assignment, e.g.,
  - Allow student to work with a partner
  - Adapt formal research paper into more engaging assignment
- Change focus or timing of lesson
- Reschedule or adapt tests



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[www.schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)



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COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESOURCES

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Dedicated to helping schools support their students  
through crisis and loss

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Help Me Prepare



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## COALITION *to* SUPPORT GRIEVING STUDENTS

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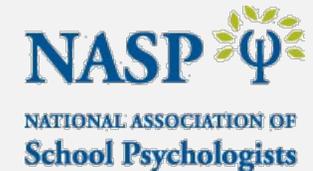


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### Founding Members



School Social Work  
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# Supporting Organizational Members



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# [www.grievingstudents.org](http://www.grievingstudents.org)



COALITION *to* SUPPORT  
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Video and Downloadable Grief  
Support Modules for School  
Personnel

## Conversation & Support

Talking With Children >

What Not to Say >

Providing Support Over Time >

Peer Support >

VIEW MODULES



Conversation &  
Support

Developmental  
Cultural Considerations

Professional  
Separation & Self-Care

Crisis & Special  
Circumstances

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