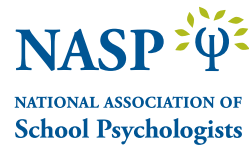




Workshop 2 (3rd Edition, 2019)



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Handout 28: Sample Classroom Meeting Script and Outline

NOTE: *If you feel unable to read this script to your class, or would like support when reading it, please let us know and we will have a school mental health professional come to your room and facilitate this meeting.*

READ TO STUDENTS THE FOLLOWING:

I have some very sad news to share with you. John Collins, a third-grade student here at ABC Elementary School, died in a car accident Saturday afternoon. The family is planning the funeral and it will probably be on Thursday afternoon of this week. We will let you and your parents know when we have more information about this.

When something like this happens, people sometimes have questions, and I would like to answer any questions you may have. I may or may not know all the answers and will be honest with you if I don't know or if we are not allowed to share specific information out of respect for John's family. I may also tell you to ask your parents, or I may have to go ask someone else and get back to you with more information.

I also want to let you know that different people react to this type of event in different ways, and that is OK. Some people may cry, others may have trouble eating or sleeping, some people may find it hard to do work, and others may not have much of a reaction at all. If you want to talk to someone about your feelings or reactions regarding John's death, tell your teacher or me, and we can make sure you get to talk to someone. Does anyone have any questions?

WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS, PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING:

1. Provide ONLY verified facts.
 - a. Tell the truth (don't ignore or minimize facts).
 - b. Use brief and simple explanations for younger children. When discussing the death, avoid euphemisms ("went to sleep and did not wake up," "went away," or "lost"), which may be taken literally and cause fear or misunderstanding.
 - c. Expect to repeat facts.
 - d. Do not give details that students do not ask for, especially those that you think might frighten children (e.g., that car accidents are very common).
 - e. Avoid sensationalizing or speculating.
2. Allow students to ask questions and use the following options when responding to what students ask and say:
 - a. Explicitly identify what information is rumor, not fact, and dispel crisis rumors.
 - b. Let students' questions guide what information you share.
 - c. Use one of three general responses:
 - i. "This is what we know," when sharing verified crisis facts.
 - ii. "I don't know," when addressing crisis circumstances that have yet to be verified.
 - iii. "Talk to your parents," when addressing crisis circumstances that are not appropriate for classroom discussions (e.g., Why did God let this happen?).
3. Balance the information with reassurance about what is being done to keep them safe and how rare these events are (if they are indeed rare). Remember the referral procedures in case a student needs more support.
4. Let your students know that they can go to the office if they would like to discuss this event or feel they would like some help coping with this loss.

Note. Also see "Talking to Children About Death," Hospice, <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>; and Reeves et al. (2010, pp. 265–266, and Table 9.3 on p. 267).

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