

Crisis Bereavement Group Intervention Guidelines Facilitator Outline

Initial Phase *When it is necessary to diffuse, remove and protect students from additional trauma:*

- Establish and maintain a safe and secure environment
- Limit sensorial effects and minimize secondary exposure
- Assist those with visceral reactions
- Locate and direct students to a support area
- Establish privacy
- Show and maintain control
- Mill about the room
- Formulate questions

Organizational Phase *To determine which staff will do what, where, when and with whom:*

- Consultation between leaders; who will do what, where, when, etc.
- Determine whether to divide the group
- Set up chairs and writing surface
- Provide instructions to ancillary staff
- Give firm and audible verbal instructions to the large group
- Divide into subgroups if necessary

Introduction Phase *To introduce students to the intervention process:*

- Make a sympathetic statement
- Describe the purpose of the intervention
- Describe the agenda (give examples of questions that may be asked)
- Define what the desired outcome is
- Describe the roles of the “scribe” and “facilitator”
- State the ground rules
- Start introductions

Fact Phase *To help students to understand what happened:*

- Provide appropriate information about the magnitude of the event
- If necessary: have an authoritative source present the facts
- Ask: “Where were you when it happened (or, when you heard about it)?” (Scribe considers the use of a diagram)
- Ask: “What did you see or hear?”
- If present: ask authoritative source to return with updates

Ventilation Phase *To have students express their reactions to the incident:*

- Acknowledge overt expressions of emotions
- With the less overtly emotive students ask: “What did you feel, think or do when it happened?” (scribe)
- If indicated ask: “How do you feel about the way you acted at the time?”
- Ask: “Would anyone like to say what is (was) the worst thing about this event?” **
- Ask: “Has this event caused you to think differently about yourself or the world?” Listen for shattered assumptions (scribe)

- If indicated ask: “Since the time it happened what memories stand out in your mind?”**
(scribe)
- If indicated ask: “Since the time it happened how have you been acting or thinking?”**
(scribe)

Validation Phase *To have their thoughts and feelings affirmed:*

- Restate or acknowledge key elements of their stories
- Review and summarize physical and behavioral reactions* (scribe)
- Review and summarize common emotional and cognitive reactions* (scribe)
- If indicated: carefully address IES questions*
- Normalize common physical, behavioral, emotional and cognitive reactions*

Prediction Phase *To predict their probable course of adjustment:*

- Consider the need to assess student proximity to the event (scribe)
- Ask: “After all that you have been through what do you think will happen (to you personally) in the next days and weeks?”**
- Predict the course of bereavement*
- Identify common grief reactions*
- Identify uncommon or unhealthy grief reactions*
- If appropriate: present simplified symptoms of depression and/or PTSD*

Meaning Phase *To help students to appropriately interpret the event:*

- Ask: “Why do you think this happened?”
- Place the event in its proper context or perspective
- If appropriate: address conclusions about the act of suicide or homicide (scribe notes student observed symptoms of mental illness or thinking errors)
- Address attitudes and beliefs about the world. Consider asking: “What is it that you realize now that you didn’t realize before?”
- If indicated ask: “Since the time it happened how do you feel about yourself?”
- Reconcile differences in student perceptions with what you know happened
- Ask: “How many of you agree with the following statements?” (Positive conclusions about themselves or the world)*
- Challenge incorrect, unhealthy or unreasonable conclusions about themselves and the world
- Utilize positive role models in the group to assist you in this challenge
- Carefully explore for positive by-products (scribe)
- Explore lessons that may apply. Consider asking: “How would you act if this ever happened again?”
- Ask: “Are there any (personal) changes you want to make as a result of this event?”
- Reinforce positive changes that sound reasonable and healthy (scribe)

Sublimation Phase *To help students to sublimate potentially maladaptive thoughts and feelings:*

- Distill useful information from students choosing to reminisce
- Channel negative emotions into meaningful and socially constructive activities (noted by scribe) at school and in the community
- If appropriate: discuss what to expect and appropriate behavior at the visitation and funeral

Affiliation Phase *To establish and encourage social support for students:*

- Ask: "What can you do to help each other during this difficult time?"
- Ask: "How have you been (or what are your plans for) coping?" (scribe)
- Encourage students to link up with others for support
- Suggest and discuss other plans for coping*
- Distribute appropriate materials
- If indicated: address parental responses to the event
- If indicated: address peer responses to the event

Re-entry Phase *To end the intervention and return students to their normal routine:*

- Announce intentions to end the group meeting
- Ask if anyone is confused or has become more upset than when the intervention began (scribe)
- Remind students of the purpose of the group
- Thank and praise students for their participation
- Answer any final questions
- Consider asking students to complete a survey
- Encourage their return to class
- Retain some positive peer role models
- For those who wish to remain consider repeating steps in the Meaning phase
- Encourage positive peer role models to counter incorrect, unhealthy or unrealistic conclusions
- Those who do not seem to be benefiting should be dealt with on an individual basis
- Consider parent contact with a referral to a community resource
- Assess which students may require follow up assistance

Follow-up Phase *To track and assist the student's adjustment:*

- Arrange for follow up contact
- Track and guide individuals and small groups toward a therapeutic resolution
- Monitor progress
- If necessary: refer the student to a community resource
- Terminate contact when student levels of performance return to preexisting levels

Notes:

Tasks prefaced by the words "If indicated:" are additional tasks to be considered when there is a time delay of one or more days between the event and this intervention. Tasks followed by the word "scribe" indicate that the scribe should write down what students say in relation to that task.

*Examples of this information can be found in "Crisis Bereavement Group Intervention Guidelines for School Social Workers" or its appendices.

**These questions are derived from Mitchell, J. T., Everly, G. (1996). *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: An Operations Manual for the Prevention of Traumatic Stress among Emergency Service and Disaster Workers*. Ellicott City, MD: Chevron, or from Young, M. (1998). *The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual*, Second Edition. Washington, DC: National Organization for Victim Assistance.

Simplification of the CBGI model for use with young or special population students

- Explain why you are with the students
- Tell them what happened
- Provide an opportunity for them to safely express their thoughts and feelings about the event
- Validate their thoughts and feelings
- Predict how they may be feeling later
- Help them to understand why it happened
- Give them ideas on how they can positively cope with their feelings later on
- Talk about support systems for them
- Encourage their return to class or focus on a modified academic task