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Special Edition
June 16, 2011

An important notice from PPC Canada, your Employee Assistance Program:

Last evening, with the hopes of the 2011 Stanley Cup victory dismissed British Columbians quickly experienced shock and dismay by the post game violence in downtown Vancouver. How does one cope with impact of crisis situations such as this? How do we support our family and colleagues? How do we talk to our children about violence and events such as these?

At PPC Canada we want to provide you with relevant information and support. Enclosed are three articles that can answer some of these questions for you.

1. Violence in Your Community – What you can do for yourself and for others
2. Recovering from a Crisis Situation
3. Talking to Children about Violence and Other Sensitive and Complex Issues in the World

How does a crowd get out of control like it did last night?

Social psychologists have various theories about “mob psychology” and there are many factors that come into play. As noted on www.disabledworkerlaw.com, when people are in a crowd, they are more likely to engage in impulsive and deviant acts. Groups encourage a sense of anonymity among its members, and it is this anonymity that results in *mob psychology* and other antisocial behaviours. When people think they are anonymous, they are likely to behave in anti-social ways because they do not believe they can be singled out among the crowd.

Additionally, if an individual acts in an antisocial manner while in a group, it is the group’s fault as well as the individual’s.. This leads to an overall weakening of social influences and self-consciousness. Social norms no longer apply to members of the group, but rather, the group creates its own set of norms to which every member adheres.

The presence of a group influence has a large impact on individual behaviours. A person may find him/herself in a totally different psychological state than he/she usually resides. Increased anonymity, diffusion of responsibility, and the increased energy that results from the existence of a group lead to a weakened self-consciousness, and encourage individuals to behave in ways that would not belong in normal social environments.

Wednesday was a dark evening....Thursday brought some light

Wednesday evening, the crowd that caused the damage was the minority, not the majority. It’s also important to recognize the contributions and efforts of thousands of citizens who helped with the clean-up and restoration of Vancouver streets starting in the wee morning hours and throughout the day on Thursday.

As difficult as this event was, it’s noteworthy that positive stories continue to evolve and overall true sportsmanship, good character, and city pride have been demonstrated by the majority.

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VIOLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY - WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF AND FOR OTHERS

Whether you're involved directly, through proximity or as a second-hand witness via the media, friends or family, stress and anxiety are normal reactions. There are many ways to help yourself and others manage with the feelings that accompany violent events.

What You Can Do for Yourself - Taking care of yourself is key to managing the physical and emotional symptoms that are common side effects of violence. You can start by incorporating the ideas below into your daily life:

- **Eat well-balanced and regular meals**, even if you don't feel like it. Good nutrition is very important when you're under stress.
- **Get plenty of rest.**
- **Exercise regularly.** It can help work off some physical stress symptoms, leaving you feeling calmer and better able to relax. If you're feeling lethargic it can help energize you and clear your mind.
- **Avoid caffeine**, especially if you are having trouble sleeping.
- **Spend time with other people.** Coping with stressful events is easier when people support each other.
- **Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol**, including prescription and over the counter drugs to numb the pain. It will only complicate or delay your recovery.
- **Structure your time and set priorities.** Maintain your basic normal routine, but give yourself permission to skip the extras for a while.
- **Don't make any major life changes or decisions.**
- **Do make as many small daily decisions as possible** to reassert your sense of control.
- **Don't try to avoid or deny reoccurring thoughts** or feelings about the incident. They are normal and will decrease over time.
- **Give yourself permission to feel rotten** and to share your feelings with others.
- **Do things that you enjoy.** Take mini-breaks: go out to dinner, take 10 minutes alone, watch a movie, read a favourite magazine.
- **Talk about how you're feeling.** Be willing to listen to others who need to talk about how they're feeling.
- **Don't be afraid to set limits with others** when you don't feel like talking. You don't have to discuss the incident or your feelings when you don't want to.
- **Don't label yourself as "crazy."** Remind yourself you're having normal reactions.
- **Write down your thoughts and feelings.** This can be especially helpful if you're having trouble sleeping or when you wake from a troubling dream.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** If you are having trouble coping on your own, help is available from many sources:

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Professional assistance from a counsellor may sometimes be necessary. This does not imply weakness or craziness. It simply acknowledges that the particular event was just too powerful to handle by yourself.

- In the workplace you may be able to get assistance from your co-workers, the human resource department, or company Employee Assistance Program.
- Church, temple or synagogue, friends, family, and other community resources can be valuable sources of support.

What You Can Do for Others – When violent events occur - whether personal or national - it's natural to try and help friends and loved ones cope with the difficult time. But we may not always know the best way to do it. Friends may simply need to talk or they may need help taking care of everyday tasks. The following ideas are designed to give you other ideas for reaching out to loved ones during a traumatic time.

Listening -

- Listen carefully.
- Acknowledge feelings as normal.
- Be sensitive to individual circumstances and different points of view.
- Don't respond with "you're lucky it wasn't worse." Instead, say that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help.
- Don't take emotional responses like anger personally.
- Respect an individual's need for privacy. If someone doesn't want to talk about the incident or their feelings, don't insist.

Reaching Out At Work -

- Organize support groups at work to help one another.
- Offer a "listening ear" to someone who hasn't asked for help but may need it.
- Give encouragement, support and understanding with on-the-job issues.
- Identify resources for additional help (Employee Assistance Programs, mental health benefit, human resources department).

Helping Family and Friends -

- Offer help with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring or the family.
- Respect their need for privacy and time alone.
- Suggest available help (EAP, community resources, church groups, etc.)
- Keep communication open - be available and accessible.

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RECOVERING FROM A CRISIS SITUATION

If you or someone you know has experienced a frightening situation, overwhelming danger, or a sudden loss of security, you may experience what is commonly called "post traumatic stress." In other words, after a very scary or difficult situation, you may experience significant stress or discomfort.

It is important to remember even a "perceived" or "imagined" threat of violence or danger can be as emotionally disturbing as a real threat of violence. When a person experiences an event as life-threatening, it shatters one's basic assumptions about self and the world we live in.

Immediately after the traumatic experience, a person may not feel anything except numbness and shock. As time goes on, more feelings emerge and many find themselves "re-playing" the event over and over in their heads, creating different scenarios about what they could have done differently. Some just can't forget the uncontrollable feelings of terror, helplessness, and the loss of control they felt at the time. It is not unusual to feel hyper-alert or jumpy, to have difficulty sleeping, or be emotionally withdrawn from friends and loved ones. Anxiety, anger, and depression are common early responses.

Over time, one may find themselves experiencing some of the following signs and symptoms of stress:

Physical

- Sweating
- Appetite changes
- Rashes
- Tension
- Fatigue
- Increase of alcohol use
- Headaches
- Insomnia

Intellectual

- Forgetfulness
- Dulled senses
- Poor concentration
- Poor job performance
- Negative self-talk
- Confusion
- Difficulty making decisions

Emotional

- Anxiety
- Guilt

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- Mood swings
- Anger
- Depression
- Stoicism
- Grief
- Frustration
- Crying spells
- Easily discouraged
- Apathy
- Easily startled

Behavioural

- Withdrawal
- Lashing out at others
- Irritable with others
- Loss of interest in activities
- Difficulty in getting to work on time
- Lowered sex drive
- Inability to perform previous tasks
- Nagging

Responses to a frightening event are individual and the preceding symptoms are normal reactions that can vary in severity and duration. Following are ideas and suggestions to help deal with whatever reactions and feelings are experienced.

- **Talk to someone who will listen and allow you to experience your feelings.** Talking to co-workers about your feelings is part of the healing and recovery process. Not talking about your feelings will not make them go away. As you express your feelings, understand that these feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Share with co-workers and family what you saw, heard, touched, smelled, etc. It's okay to recreate the experience as it happened. It will help you not to imagine or fantasize the situation and to deal with what affected you the most.
- **Talk to your family and friends.** They need to know what's happening to you. Don't shut them out or underestimate their ability to understand and deal with life's traumas. Involve them in ways they can support you: meeting for lunch, taking you to or picking you up from work, going for a walk together. This provides both exercise and a time to share.
- **Use your community.** Call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), religious leader, physician, counsellor, the local crisis line, etc.
- **Use extra precautions with your safety.** Precautions allow you to regain a feeling of control over your life.
- **Take care of yourself.** Be sure to find time to exercise and eat well. Avoid drugs and alcohol. Ask for assistance from family and friends, delegate simple daily tasks that may feel overpowering right now.

Continue talking to people over time and share what has been happening to you since the event. Are you experiencing tension, poor concentration, the need for longer lunch breaks,

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sleeplessness, irritability, tardiness, nightmares, crying spells, etc.? As you share your feelings with others, the reactions will begin to fade over a period of time. It is important to allow yourself time to grieve and for your feelings of security to heal at their own pace. Keep in mind that who you are, your personal values, the amount of social support you have and other life events you have experienced are all factors that will affect the resolution of a traumatic event. Other events in your life may trigger vivid memories of this trauma and new sudden feelings. If you find that your reactions are seriously disrupting your ability to work or maintain relationships with others, please consider seeking professional counselling.

Dealing with Trauma and Tragedy - *What You Can Do for Others*

When others experience traumatic events, we often feel a natural inclination to help friends and loved ones cope with the difficult time. But we may not always know the best way to help. Friends may simply need to talk or they may need someone to help them take care of everyday tasks for a few days. The following ideas may provide some guidance for reaching out to loved ones during a traumatic time.

Remember to take care of yourself first. Only then can you effectively help others.

Listening

- Listen carefully.
- Acknowledge feelings as normal.
- Be sensitive to individual circumstances and different points of view.
- Don't respond with "you're lucky it wasn't worse." Instead, say that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help.
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TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT VIOLENCE AND OTHER SENSITIVE AND COMPLEX ISSUES IN THE WORLD

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Growing up has never been easy. It's especially difficult for young people in times of crisis. We owe it to our children to listen to what is on their minds, and in their hearts, and give them the best of our understanding and our guidance. Educators for Social Responsibility has prepared this guide for adults who are concerned about how to communicate with young people about difficult issues in their wider world.

This guide explores some of the questions that parents and teachers ask most frequently about ways to have discussions. We hope this helps you listen and respond to the concerns of the children you care about.

Should children watch coverage about these types of tragedies?

It depends on the age and maturity of the children. Parents may decide that some shows and topics are inappropriate. However, if children are going to watch programs about the event, we recommend that a parent or caregiver watch with them. Afterwards, talking together about reactions to the coverage and feelings about the event in general can help children make sense of a seemingly senseless tragedy.

How can I judge if a child is ready to talk about difficult events?

Most children from age four to five and above would appreciate talking with adults they trust. In the media there is daily discussion of difficult topics, and it is likely that children know about them. However, it is also quite likely that they have some confusion about the facts and the magnitude of the danger they personally face. They often have mistaken information, questions, and some strong feelings. Often children are hesitant to share their questions and fears with adults. For this reason, we recommend that adults open the way for children to talk about their concerns.

How do I open up the subject with children?

The key word here is LISTEN. Most experts agree that it is best NOT to open up a conversation with children by giving them a lecture - even an informal, introductory lecture - on the particular tragedy that is on the news. Don't burden children with information they may not be ready for. The best approach is to listen carefully to children's spontaneous questions and comments, and then respond to them in an appropriate, supportive way. Let children's concerns, in their own words, guide the direction of the discussion.

Won't it just scare children more if we talk about it?

No, not if you listen to children and respond in a supportive, sensitive way to what you hear. No matter how frightening some feelings are, it is far more frightening to think that no one is willing to talk about them. If we communicate by our silence that this - or any other subject - is too scary or upsetting to talk about, then the children, who depend on us, may experience the added fear that

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we are not able to take care of them. Young children especially need to feel secure in the knowledge that the adults in their lives can manage difficult topics and deep feelings.

What if children never bring up the subject? Should I just wait or is there something I can do?

Some children may not bring things up because they are genuinely not concerned; others may never bring up the subject even if it's on their minds; some are afraid of upsetting their parents or teachers by bringing it up; while others are too overwhelmed by their feelings to open up a discussion. As adults we can at least try to assess how children are feeling in order to decide whether a discussion is appropriate.

Children who are troubled but have difficulty talking about their concerns may need special attention. It can be helpful if we gently start the conversation ourselves. You might ask a simple opening question such as "How do you feel about what happened?" Later on, you might want to ask, "Do you ever think about what happened? No matter what their response is, we need to listen - carefully and with care - to what our children have to say.

It feels so passive just to listen. Is it appropriate to tell children how I feel?

There are several pitfalls in sharing feelings about particular tragedies outright with children. A serious one is that we might burden them with our adult concerns, raising new questions and fears for them, rather than helping them deal with questions and fears they already have. Another is that we might cut off the expression of what's on their minds and in their hearts as we get wrapped up in expressing what's on ours and miss hearing what children want to tell us. We might simply find ourselves talking over their heads, answering questions that weren't asked, providing information that isn't useful, satisfying OUR need to "give" our children something rather than satisfying THEIR need to be heard and understood. We wouldn't want to communicate the message that what THEY have to say is not important.

This is not to say, however, that we need to be passive -good listening is a very active process. After we've listened carefully, it may then be appropriate for us to respond in ways that provide assurance that the adults in their lives care and are trying to promote peace. We may also want to say that we share some of the same feelings and remind children that we'll be together during these difficult times.

How can I listen to children in the most effective and helpful way?

As you listen to children, show that you are interested and attentive. Try to understand what they are saying from THEIR point of view. Don't make judgments about what they say no matter how silly or illogical it may sound to you at first. If you don't understand something, ask them to explain it. Show your respect for them and their ideas.

As parents, teachers and caregivers know, children are not always able to express what they mean or what they feel, and what they say doesn't always mean the same thing for them as it does for adults. Sometimes it takes a bit of gentle probing to find out what's going on behind the initial words they utter. Comments such as, "That's interesting, can you tell me more about it?" or, "What exactly do you mean by that...?" are examples of ways to elicit more information from children without judging the rightness or wrongness of what they are saying.

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If they seem to be struggling to make something clear, it can be particularly useful and reassuring to have you help them summarize and focus their concerns. Clarifying questions and statements help children sort out their ideas and feelings without interfering with their thinking process.

Good listening also involves paying very careful attention to the things children may NOT be saying. Be aware of their nonverbal messages -facial expressions, fidgeting, gestures, posture, tone of voice, or others -which indicate that strong emotions may be present.

It is reassuring to children to have adults acknowledge that their feelings are okay. A comment such as, "You seem sad when we talk about this. I think I know how you feel because I feel sad too," tells a child that the feelings are not only normal and understandable, but also that you have similar feelings and are still able to cope.

What if children don't want to talk about these issues?

If you ask good opening questions and the child clearly isn't interested in talking about certain issues, then don't push. Again, it's important for us to communicate to children our respect for how they feel. This extends to respecting their right NOT to talk about something they don't feel ready to talk about. There are some children who simply aren't concerned about these things and there's no reason to force them into this awareness.

Some children are reluctant to talk about tragedies because their feelings of fear and confusion overwhelm them, or because they don't feel confident that adults will be able to hear their concerns and respond to them in a way that makes sense. Adolescents may be more reluctant to talk if they perceive their parents and/or teachers having different opinions. They may think that the adults in their lives will try to impose their beliefs on them. These young people need to know that the doors to communication are open when they are ready. One way to let them know this might be to say something like, "Are kids talking about what happened? I'd be really interested in hearing about what you and your friends think. Let me know if you want to talk."

Be aware of signals young children send out through their play, their drawing and writing, their spontaneous conversation, and other ways they might communicate about their preoccupations. Young children often use their play to work out what they are hearing, and observing them as they play can give us important clues about their thoughts and feelings. Similarly, if you observe children drawing one violent scene after another, overhear conversations where they seem unnaturally concerned with violence and hopelessness, if your children seem in any way preoccupied with images of destruction, then it is appropriate for you to let them know that you have noticed this and that you wonder what it means. Use your own judgment, and LISTEN attentively to what they have to say.

Once you have really listened to what is on children's minds, you will be in a far better position to respond to them.

How do I deal with the different emotions that children may have about these issues?

It is natural and healthy for there to be a wide range of emotions about any particular tragedy. Some children will be sad, anxious and even fearful for their own family's safety, others will be

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confused about how to make sense of the events, and others will have little reaction. Some will respond with excitement and anticipation, while others will have a mix of emotions - fear, sorrow, and worry, for example.

Deep feelings are not atypical for children trying to come to terms with death and suffering and the reasons that people resort to violence. It is our role as adults to help them explore these feelings.

The feelings children have will generally be attached to the developmental issues that are most pressing for them. For early elementary school children it will usually be issues of separation and safety. For older elementary and middle school children it will be issues of fairness and care for others. For adolescents it will often involve the ethical dilemmas posed by the situation.

Listening closely and discerning what some underlying issues might be will help your responses be more productive. In some areas, such as concerns for personal safety, we can provide reassurance, while in other areas our role should be that of a listener. Listening in and of itself can be reassuring to children.

Bringing closure to discussions of feelings is sometimes difficult. Rather than trying to summarize or falsely reassure children, it is best to simply thank them for sharing so deeply and affirm how much they care about others and the world around them. You can express that it is this caring that makes you proud and gives you strength and hope.

After I have listened to children's concerns, how do I respond? Should I give them facts?

It is best not to jump in and tell children everything we think or know about the particular situation, even after we have heard what's on their minds. Nevertheless, there are a number of helpful responses we can make. Whatever our response, it is important that we provide reassurance to the children we care about.

First, we can respond to the obvious items of misinformation that they have picked up and help them distinguish fantasy from reality. When we have listened to what they think and feel, we can gently correct their misinformation by statements about what happened at the World Trade Centre like, "By the way, it isn't true that this has happened in lots of other cities."

We can also answer children's direct questions in simple and straightforward terms. If you think there is more to the question than is first apparent -underlying confusions or unexpressed anxiety - then ask for an explanation of where the question came from and then listen carefully. Keep your responses brief and simple. Follow the lead of children's questions and give no more information than is asked for. Going off on one's own tangent is an easy trap for adults to fall into when answering a child's questions.

The answers to some questions that children ask are not clear and straightforward. When children ask such questions as, "Why did people do this?" we can explain that some people think one way about it and others think another. It is important for children to hear that there are differences of opinion and different ways of seeing the conflict.

Finally, we can give our children the opportunity to continue to explore their questions and to learn

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from this conflict. For instance, war play is a common phenomenon among young boys, and it is natural for them to use it to further explore and work out what they are hearing in regard to a violent situation. One of the most effective ways for older children to learn is for them to pursue their own questions through talking with others, and reading various viewpoints and perspectives on an event or issue. We can keep the channels of communication open with them by paying attention to their questions and supporting their exploration.

For older children and adolescents, these events may raise important issues about the ethics of violence, the ways conflicts are best resolved, and insuring school security. For adolescents concerned about their own potential involvement, it raises questions about their own options and choices. These are important issues for young people to talk about and think through with adults they trust.

At the same time, young people can derive hope by learning about conflict resolution and developing concrete skills in resolving conflict non-violently. This is an opportunity for them to explore alternative means of resolving conflicts and ways that, even when a conflict becomes violent, people continue to work toward its resolution. In addition, it would be valuable for them to think about how they may pursue a constructive response that promotes peace and security in their schools and neighbourhoods.

I have strong opinions about what happened. Should I share my beliefs with children?

Because the opinions of adults in a child's life carry such weight (especially with younger children), we recommend that you focus on what the child is thinking and feeling. Stating an opinion, especially in the early stages of discussion, can block open communication by preventing children, who hold different opinions, from openly sharing and discussing them for fear of disapproval. Since most older children are aware of their parents' opinions anyway, it is perhaps more important to help children to think critically about many points of view and arrive at their own well thought-out conclusions.

However, it is important to communicate to children the value of hearing other points of view and respecting the people who hold them. Helping children understand that the issue of violence, for example, is a complex one allows them to feel that their opinions can make a contribution to our understanding of the issue. We recommend that you stress the importance of their examining a variety of points of view, as well as your own, and their learning to appreciate what each has to offer.

Difference of opinion can be very healthy, and something that both adults and children can learn from. Often, however, these differences degenerate into unproductive arguments where both the adult and child become entrenched even more in their positions. Constructive dialogue begins with a good deal of listening and a sincere effort to understand what the other person is saying, and why he or she sees it as valid. It is important to avoid statements that categorically diminish the adolescent's opinions such as "When you grow up you'll understand that..." or "You don't know what you're talking about." Instead, restate what the child has said to make sure you understand it. Listen carefully to the child's point of view, and ask questions to help him or her clarify it. Rather than countering those statements, with which you disagree, ask questions that can help you understand the child's perspective.

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There are respectful ways of disagreeing which you can model by stating your disagreements in the form of, "I experience things differently. I think that..." rather than telling the child that he or she is wrong. The goal, after all, is not to dictate opinions to children, but rather to help them make their own reasoned decisions about controversial issues. Finally, help your child understand that a person's opinions can change, and that a decision reached today might be different tomorrow with the addition of new ideas and information.

How can I talk with children if I feel that my own grasp of the facts and issues is inadequate?

Fortunately, we don't need to be experts in order to listen to children. The questions of very young children seldom require complicated technical answers. When older children ask for information we don't have, it is fine to say something like, "That's an interesting question, and I don't know the answer. Let's find out together." The process of figuring out where to get the information, and going through the steps to obtain it, can be a powerfully reassuring experience for children, especially when a trusted adult participates with them. In a small but significant way, this experience can demonstrate for young people that there are orderly ways to go about solving problems and that the world is not beyond our understanding. If a child's questions don't lend themselves to this kind of research process, it is equally effective to say something like, "I don't know the answer to that and I'm not sure anyone does. I do know, however, that many good thinkers throughout the world are working hard to understand this issue."

How can I reassure and comfort children when I honestly don't feel hopeful myself?

On one hand, it is certainly appropriate for adults to acknowledge that they, too, are concerned about the state of the world. On the other hand, we must not impose our feelings on children. If you really believe that your own concerns may be overwhelming to the children in your life, then you might seek out an adult support system for yourself. This might be a group of other adults with similar feelings who need to share and discuss their concerns and questions. If a support group isn't practical, then you might find a competent, caring individual to talk with to sort out your feelings. It then becomes easier to offer genuine help to children.

What can I say that is both comforting and reassuring?

Just by listening to children you are providing reassurance. By your ability to hear calmly, even their wildest concerns, you communicate that their fears are not too frightening to deal with. By trying to understand children, you communicate that their feelings are neither abnormal nor silly, and you communicate the reassurance that they do not have to be alone with their concerns.

You can also help children find a way to step out of their position of powerlessness. You can tell them honestly that their concerns are quite healthy because people's concern is the first step toward doing something to make the world safer, and that the most effective antidote to anxiety, fear or powerlessness is action. Engage them in a conversation about the way in which their school is working to make it a more peaceful place and explore ways in which they might be an active part of the effort to create a peaceful community in their school, home and neighbourhood.

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What if a child is fascinated by a particular tragic event?

Due to the way these events are often portrayed in the media, it is natural for some children to be fascinated and, at times, excited by it. Preadolescent boys, especially, may have a fascination with some of the violence.

The reporting of violence, sometimes takes on the tone of a sports event, and the language used in public discourse is often highly sanitized. As a result, some children may not be sensitive to the human suffering created by tragedies, or the sadness and anxiety other children experience as a result. We need to help them see the other dimensions of the issue - the ones that are not being reported.

There are age appropriate ways to help children see the human and environmental consequences for all sides, and the complexity of the issues involved.

What if children seem to have excessive fears that seem to be focused on the tragedy? (nightmares, obsession with violence, and weapons, etc.)

Deep feelings of sadness, anxiety, and confusion are not atypical for children trying to come to terms with death and suffering and the reasons that people resort to violence. Children with "extreme" concerns need to be listened to and understood the same way that children with "normal" concerns do. It may be more difficult for the adults closest to them to help them put their strong feelings into words. When children are troubled and their parents and teachers have difficulty helping them sort the trouble out - no matter what the issue - it may make sense to seek professional help. The problem may be as simple as untangling a particularly frightening bit of misinformation. But, if you have doubts about what a child's fears mean, or how to help the child deal with them, we strongly encourage you to consult a counsellor or other professional trained in this area.

If a close family member or friend has been involved in the tragedy directly, how can I reassure children and help allay their fears?

You will want to watch for signs of significant increases in anxiety, distraction, fear, or hopelessness, and know where you can go for additional help in your area. Support groups are often formed for adults and children whose family members are involved in a crisis. Sometimes crisis is a trigger that reminds children of another crisis closer to home. Your school may need to form a group with children who are feeling stronger anxiety. Again, there are many professionals who are now available to help parents, teachers and children.

For many children, fear and anxiety will come and go, and for some, the anxiety and fear can be more constant. There are no easy ways to allay their fears. However, it is important to maintain the normal family or classroom routines and schedules as much as possible, and to listen in the supportive ways we've suggested in this guide.

Validate children's feelings and keep the channels of communication open. It will also help to provide reassurance through positive and hopeful comments. Finally, when you are talking with

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children, especially young children, give them details about this friend or family member. Continue to make the person real and present for them by talking about him or her.

If young people want to do something about particular events, is it appropriate to encourage them to act? What, realistically, can adolescents do?

Sometimes simply knowing the facts can lead to anxiety, fear, and powerlessness. One way to help young people overcome these feelings is to engage them in taking actions that make a difference. There are many actions young people can take, and possibly the most important one is to learn more about the issue. From there, however, it is important that young people learn to act to make a difference in their own worlds first. They can set up study groups with friends, organize a town meeting in their school or community to talk with others about their concerns or questions, put together a library shelf of books on the issue, or express their point of view in a letter to the editor. They can also join with adults or other young people who are participating in a wide variety of ways, such as fund raising for the school mediation program.

However, it is important that the children generate and implement the actions THEY choose to pursue. Although it may be helpful for children to know the range of things that other children and adults are doing to make a difference, adults must remember not to enlist young people in their own causes. Because young people know about a particular issue, it does not mean that it is their sole responsibility to solve the problem. They need to see adults actively engaged in solutions as well.

What can I, as a parent, do if my children want to learn more about the roots of violence?

Begin by talking with your child's teacher, the principal of the school, or the parent advisory group.. You may also want to talk with the parents of other children in the class. It may be helpful to begin by setting up discussion groups of parents and teachers in the school, or to set up an evening parent advisory group meeting.

What can schools, in cooperation with families and community, do?

Schools can help in a number of important ways. Above all else they can provide a safe, caring, and supportive environment for children to talk with each other about their thoughts and feelings. This helps children understand that they are not alone and that there are caring adults and other young people who share their concerns. Providing a caring network both at home and at school is reassuring to children and supports a normal level of functioning. Secondly, schools can help young people overcome the sense of powerlessness that often arises in this kind of situation. Young people have many questions about violence and conflict in the world. Helping them pursue answers to these questions and helping them learn more about ways they can deal with conflict creatively is empowering to young people. They gain confidence in their ability to understand what is going on around them, to acquire information from a variety of sources, to appreciate divergent perspectives, and to learn about complex issues.

One of the most effective ways to involve young people of all ages in this exploration is to ask them to brainstorm:

- what they already know about the issues at hand,
- what they think they know but they are not sure about, and

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- what questions they have about it. After prioritizing their questions, the class can engage in interviews and readings.
- what security and insecurity means to them, and how they can help keep each other safe.

Thirdly, schools can help prevent the emergence of dehumanization, prejudice, stereotyping, and victimization of any group. Schools can help young people manage their emotions, resolve conflict, and interrupt prejudice.

But even more important, they can demonstrate ways that children can support each other and respect each other's backgrounds and perspectives. By helping young people understand the human consequences of violence in any form, schools can help them become more sensitive to other people's feelings and points of view.

Finally, young people's questions about these issues come up over and over again, even after the tragedy ends. Children process their feelings and thoughts over time. Therefore it is helpful to think about some long term goals.