



DISASTER MEDIA INTERVENTION (DMI)

Helping Students Cope With Disaster Media Coverage –
A Guide for Teachers and School Staff

Jennifer First
Toby Mills-Sandoval
Heidi Czapinski
Nathan L. First
J. Brian Houston



Disaster and Community
Crisis Center
University of Missouri

A PARTNER IN
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

This project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

DISASTER MEDIA INTERVENTION (DMI)

*Helping Students Cope With Disaster Media Coverage –
A Guide for Teachers and School Staff*

Jennifer First, MSW

Mental Health Program Manager

Toby Mills-Sandoval, LCSW

Mental Health Project Manager

Heidi Czapinski, MA

Fellow

Nathan L. First, MSW

Disaster Research Specialist

J. Brian Houston, PhD

Co-Director

Copyright © 2016 First J, Mills-Sandoval T, Czapinski H, First NL, Houston JB. (Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri). All rights reserved. You are welcome to copy or redistribute this material in print or electronically provided the text is not modified, the author and the Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri are cited in any use, and no fee is charged for copies of this publication. Unauthorized commercial publication or exploitation of this material is specifically prohibited. If you would like permission to adapt or license these materials, please contact DCC at houstonjb@missouri.edu or 573.882.3327.

This work was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The views, opinions, and content are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

For citation: First, J., Mills-Sandoval, T., Czapinski, H., First, N. L., Houston, J.B. (2016). *Disaster media intervention: Helping students cope with disaster media coverage—a guide for teachers and school staff*. Columbia: Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri.

The Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri

The Disaster and Community Center (DCC) at the University of Missouri focuses on enhancing mental and behavioral health in children, families, and communities affected by disaster. DCC provides national expertise and resources for intervention, training, consultation, and technical assistance related to disasters and terrorism, and promotes public awareness of disaster-related mental and behavioral health (henceforth DMBH or “disaster mental health”).

DCC’s mission includes providing national leadership, increasing public awareness, developing and implementing interventions, creating training protocols, generating resources, partnering with service providers, and collaborating with community partners on issues pertaining to disaster mental health. DCC is funded in part by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).

For more information, visit dcc.missouri.edu.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Disaster Media Intervention (DMI) Fact Sheet 1

DMI Introduction..... 1

Disaster Media Coverage..... 2

Understanding Disaster Media Effects on Students 3

Common Reactions to Disaster Media Coverage 4

Helping Students Cope with Disaster Media Coverage 5

Goal 1: Encourage Dialogue..... 6

Activity: Conversation Starters..... 7

Leader’s Guide: Conversation Starters 8

Worksheet: Feelings Chart 10

Worksheet: Thoughts and Feelings 11

Goal 2: Establish a Sense of Safety 12

Activity: Media Safety Message Decoder 13

Worksheet: Media Safety Message Decoder & Answer Key 14

Activity: Media Safety Role-Play..... 16

Worksheet: Media Safety Role-Play & Answer Key..... 17

Activity: Community Helpers Word Search and Matching Game 18

Activity: Community Disaster Preparedness Project..... 23

Activity: My Personal Safety Kit..... 24

Worksheet: My Personal Safety Kit 25

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Goal 3: Promote Coping Skills 27

Activity: Relaxation Practice 28

Leader’s Guide: Relaxation Practice 29

Activity: Showing Support Greeting Cards 30

Activity: Showing Support Fundraiser 31

Activity: Building Resilience with Hunter and Eve 33

Appendices 34

Answers to Common Questions I

Helping Students in Distress II

Self-Care for School Professionals III

School Policy on Disaster Media Coverage IV

Parent Handout: Helping Your Child Cope with Disaster Media Coverage V

Additional Resources VI

References VIII

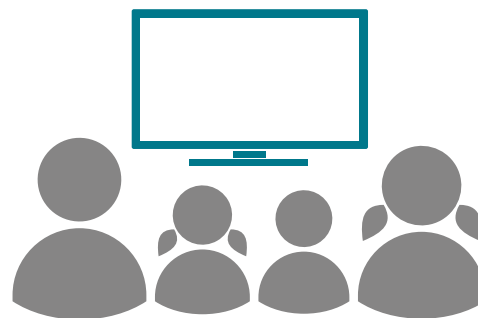
DISASTER MEDIA INTERVENTION (DMI) FACT SHEET

TARGET POPULATION

Elementary, Middle and High School Students (Ages 5-18)

PURPOSE

The **Disaster Media Intervention (DMI)** is designed to help students cope with disaster media coverage. Disasters covered in the media include natural disasters like storms or earthquakes, or human-caused disasters such as industrial accidents, terrorist attacks, or mass shootings. DMI equips teachers, counselors, social workers, administrators, and other school staff to facilitate conversations with students about these media-covered disasters, whether they occur locally or far away. Ultimately, DMI is designed to reduce distress caused by disaster media coverage by fostering healthy coping and adaptive functioning in students.



Note: For school communities directly affected by a disaster, we have compiled a list of supportive resources at the end of this manual.

CONSULTATION OR QUESTIONS

For further questions or consultation about DMI, please contact the Disaster and Community Crisis Center (DCC) at www.dcc.missouri.edu.

INTRODUCTION

Natural and human-caused disasters (e.g. tornados, hurricanes, terrorism, and mass shootings) can be chaotic, confusing, and frightening events, both for those who experience them directly and for those who learn about them through the media. Experiencing a disaster directly can cause anxiety, fear, grief, and behavioral problems in young people, and exposure to disaster media coverage can result in similar reactions.

A disaster that is covered in the media does not have to occur close to a child’s home to be upsetting for a young person. Media coverage of a major disaster like the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting or the 2011 Joplin Tornado can upset students residing far from the events. Such events can disrupt students’ mental and behavioral health, and can impede their ability to concentrate and learn in the classroom.

DISASTER MEDIA COVERAGE

Student exposure to disaster media coverage may occur through a variety of different media formats. While television and online sources may be the most common, students may also hear about disasters on the radio or read about disasters in newspapers or magazines. Therefore teachers and school staff should consider students’ exposure to disaster media coverage from all media sources (see Table 1).

Traditional Media	New Media	Social Media
Television stations and news programs	Websites for traditional media	Social network platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, Tumblr, Google+, Reddit
Newspapers	Online only news and media websites: Huffington Post, Politico, BuzzFeed	Video platforms: YouTube, Vine
Magazines	Blogs	Photo sites: Instagram, Flickr
Radio stations and news programs	Podcasts	

Table 1

While each disaster is different, news media often focus on the most sensational aspects of a disaster (e.g. death, injury, destruction) and repeatedly show emotion-stirring images and videos (e.g. burning buildings, overturned cars, destroyed structures).

As a result, the more disaster media coverage a student consumes, the more distressed that student might become. This may result in a cycle in which media coverage of a disaster causes students to worry, which compels them to watch more disaster coverage, which then causes more distress.

UNDERSTANDING DISASTER MEDIA EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

A student's understanding of disaster media coverage may vary depending on their developmental level and maturity. Disaster media coverage may be more frightening for younger students who may not understand the nature and scope of what is happening.

For example, a younger student may not understand that replays of a burning building on television is a single burning building shown repeatedly and not does not constitute a different burning building each time. Younger students may also have difficulty understanding where a disaster is taking place (e.g., how close the disaster is to their home) and thus may overestimate the threat of the event to them and their family. While older students may better understand some of these details, they too may be deeply affected by the coverage.

» Preschoolers (Age 3-4)	<p><i>Preschoolers may confuse facts with fantasy. If a preschool-age child views a distant disaster on television, they may fear that the event is close to their home, family, and school.</i></p> <p><i>Preschoolers tend to focus on sights and sounds, and generally understand words and images literally. They may believe that a repeated or replayed video that they see is a new event each time.</i></p>
» Elementary School Age (Age 5-11)	<p><i>While elementary school-age children tend to have a better understanding of the distance between themselves and catastrophic events, they still often view media coverage in personal terms, imagining how the event could directly affect them.</i></p> <p><i>After watching media coverage of a tornado in a different state, for instance, an elementary school-age child might scan the horizon during thunderstorms, feeling anxious that a tornado will strike her, her family, or her friends.</i></p>
» Older Students (Age 12-18)	<p><i>Older students typically have a better understanding of recent events, though they are often still forming their identities and their views of the world around them. Opinions that are formed as a result of witnessing major events may crystallize into tightly-held beliefs.</i></p> <p><i>High school-aged students may become fixated on media coverage of events as a way of coping with their anxiety related to the incident. They may also have a greater understanding of and concern about the event's impact on the affected community.</i></p>

COMMON REACTIONS TO DISASTER MEDIA COVERAGE

Exposure to disaster media coverage can be upsetting for students, especially when news media sources focus on the most frightening aspects of disasters. Media coverage of stressful or difficult events can cause emotional, psychological, behavioral, and physical reactions.

Teachers who are well informed about common post-disaster reactions and behaviors will be better equipped to respond to students in nuanced and empathetic ways. Students, in turn, may feel more comfortable opening up about their own feelings when they hear that such reactions are common or “normal.”

<i>Common Reactions to Disaster Media Coverage</i>	
» Emotional Reactions	<i>Anger Fear Worry Mood changes Sadness Helplessness Irritability Loss of interest in enjoyable activities Empathy</i>
» Psychological Reactions	<i>Difficulty concentrating Preoccupation with questions related to what happened Difficulty learning new information or making decisions</i>
» Behavioral Reactions	<i>Producing incomplete or lower-quality work on in-class assignments Changes in school attendance and performance on homework Conflicts or social withdrawal Aggressive or disruptive behaviors Asking “Why did this happen?” or “Could this happen here?” Wanting to talk about the event Acting younger than one’s age Increased attachment to parents or caregivers Crying</i>
» Physical Reactions	<i>Headaches Stomachaches and nausea Changes in appetite Sleep difficulties and nightmares Being easily startled Fatigue</i>

HELPING STUDENTS COPE WITH DISASTER MEDIA COVERAGE

The Disaster Media Intervention (DMI) is designed to help students reduce and cope with distress related to disaster media coverage. DMI achieves these ends in part through structured activities described in the following sections. Teachers and school staff may use all of the activities described in this manual or focus on just one or two for each goal. The length of time required for these activities will depend in part on the students' collective needs and concerns. Each section includes suggested classroom activities and strategies related to these actions and goals.

In the following sections, DMI's three primary goals are addressed.

Goal 1: Encourage Dialogue

Objective: *Encourage students to talk about their feelings and concerns with a trusted adult.*

Goal 2: Establish a Sense of Safety

Objective: *Promote and enhance student safety, and provide emotional comfort and support.*

Goal 3: Develop Coping Skills

Objective: *Help students identify and learn coping skills.*

GOAL 1: ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE

Objective: *Encourage students to talk about their feelings and concerns with a trusted adult.*

When a disaster occurs, teachers and school staff often have an opportunity to help students cope by talking about the event and its media coverage.

It is often tempting to avoid uncomfortable discussions with students about disasters and crises, particularly if one is concerned about “doing more damage” in the process. Such avoidance, however, may signal to students that the event is too upsetting to talk about or that students’ fears and concerns are unimportant. Encouraging dialogue about the disaster lets students know that teachers and school staff care about their feelings and are available to listen to their concerns.

The following strategies can help facilitate dialogue about disaster media coverage:

Start a conversation. Encourage students to talk about how they feel, but do not force them to talk if they are not ready. Let students guide the direction of the conversation. It is important to provide a safe environment where students can share how they are feeling and have the opportunity to ask questions. If students are having difficulty talking about their feelings or concerns, start a conversation using open-ended questions such as: How do you feel about what happened? What questions do you have about what happened?

Set conversation ground rules. In order to facilitate constructive discussions that encourage everyone to talk and feel respected, you may set ground rules with students.

Ground rules could include taking turns when speaking, not talking over others, and respecting the views of others even when students disagree.

Avoid stereotypes. When discussing disaster media coverage, teachers and school staff should ensure that conversations do not explicitly or implicitly blame any entire group of people for what happened. Be mindful of statements with broad, ambiguous terms such as “they” or “people like that.” If stereotyping surfaces in your conversations, explain to your students that a stereotype is a generalization about a person or a group of people without regard for individual differences. You could provide students with examples of stereotypes related to gender, race, class, or ability, and write these on the board, e.g., “All girls hate sports,” and “All boys hate cooking.” Then ask how the word “all” makes this statement inaccurate and what is wrong with making this kind of statement.

Be available to listen. Teachers and school staff should let students know that they are available to listen to students’ concerns. At times, teachers and school staff may need to clarify misinformation, but should refrain from simply lecturing on the topic or doing all of the talking. Often, students benefit just from feeling heard. Teachers can show supportive listening by maintaining eye contact, rephrasing what they hear students saying, and normalizing students’ feelings and emotions.

ACTIVITY:

Conversation Starters

Encouraging Dialogue

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Help students find ways to voice their thoughts and feelings through healthy dialogue. → Encourage students to recognize their feelings and the thoughts that are contributing to such feelings.
Age group:	All School Ages (5-18)
Length of time:	30 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Leader's Guide: <i>Conversation Starters (page 8)</i> → Worksheet: <i>Feelings Chart (page 10)</i> → Worksheet: <i>Thoughts and Feelings (page 11)</i> → Crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Read through the Conversation Starters Leader's Guide for helpful tips and specific examples of how to encourage dialogue with students. 2 Explain to students that they are going to participate in an activity to help them share their thoughts and feelings about the disaster. 3 Distribute <i>Feelings Chart</i> and <i>Thoughts and Feelings</i> worksheets to each student. Allow some quiet time for students to work on these worksheets. 4 Hold classroom discussion. Answer students' questions as needed.

Conversation Starters

This exercise guides teachers and school staff through the process of discussing a recent disaster with students. The guide can be used to facilitate class or group discussion as its own activity, or as a follow-up to any of the other activities listed in this manual.

Step 1 – Create a Comfortable Environment

For some students, talking about thoughts and feelings may be a new experience. You can help create a safe and comfortable environment by:

- » Closing the doors and silencing phones to avoid outside distractions.
- » Asking students to find quiet and comfortable places to sit.
- » Offering younger students items such as coloring pages, modeling clay, or other materials to use during class discussion. Children are often less anxious if they are able to keep their hands busy during difficult conversations.
- » Optional:
 - Ask students to sit in a circle, facing each other.
 - Use a prop such as a “talking stick” to encourage only one speaker at a time.

Step 2 – Set Conversation Ground Rules

Encouraging a sense of trust and acceptance will help students feel comfortable when expressing themselves. By setting ground rules, you can help to create a sense of trust and acceptance with students. Consider the following agreements to use with students.

- » We will take turns speaking and will not talk over others.
- » We agree to talk openly about our thoughts and feelings, and respect the views of others even when we disagree.
- » We will not talk about what others say in this group with other students outside of the group.
- » But, it is OK to talk with our parents about our discussions-just keep the conversation about your experience.
- » Ask students if they have any questions or concerns.
- » Ask students for verbal confirmation that they will follow established ground rules.

Conversation Starters (cont'd)

Step 3-Facilitate the Conversation

After you have established ground rules, you are ready to facilitate the conversation by:

» **Asking** – You might lead with questions like:

- *What kind of things are you feeling when you see (the recent event) in the media?*
- *Are there any questions about (the recent event) that you want to ask?*
- *Who is a trusted adult you can talk to about difficult subjects like this?*

» **Listening** – It is easy for adults to feel that they need to fill the informative role for students. While it is true that clarifying details can help calm a child's anxiety, often the most important thing adults can do is listen. Here are some helpful hints to being a good listener:

- *Give the student who is speaking your undivided attention. Make eye contact and keep facial expressions neutral as much as possible.*
- *You can nod your head or make remarks such as "I see" or "okay" to reinforce that you hear what they are saying.*
- *After a student has finished speaking, thank the student for their contribution.*

» **Responding** – Once you have encouraged students to talk and have shown them you are listening, you can respond to your students in ways that show their concerns have been heard. If you are not sure what to say, try some of these active listening strategies:

- **Paraphrase:** *"I hear you saying that you've been feeling really frightened about the disaster. Is that right?"*
- **Normalize emotions:** *"Feeling angry is a very common response in these situations."*
- **Ask clarifying questions:** *"When you say 'trouble sleeping,' what do you mean?"*
- **Ask furthering questions:** *"Would you tell us a little more about that?"*

Note: It is important to remember that you do not need to fix or solve anything in this process, but rather can hold space for students to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Often, being proactive and setting aside the time to do this activity saves teachers and school staff time in the long run. Allowing students to discuss their emotions as they arise can reduce distractions and help students bring focus back to their schoolwork and their regular routine.

Feelings Chart

Encouraging Dialogue

Use this feelings chart as a guide. Think about how you are feeling right now. Then look at the different feelings and facial expressions on the chart and pick one (or more than one) that best matches how you feel.



Happy



Sad



Withdrawn



Scared



Confident



Joyful



Satisfied



Aggressive



Grieving



Confused



Surprised



Negative



Undecided



Frustrated



Hurt



Stubborn



Horrificed



Disappointed



Guilty



Disgusted



Optimistic



Angry



Lonely



Nervous



Miserable

WORKSHEET:

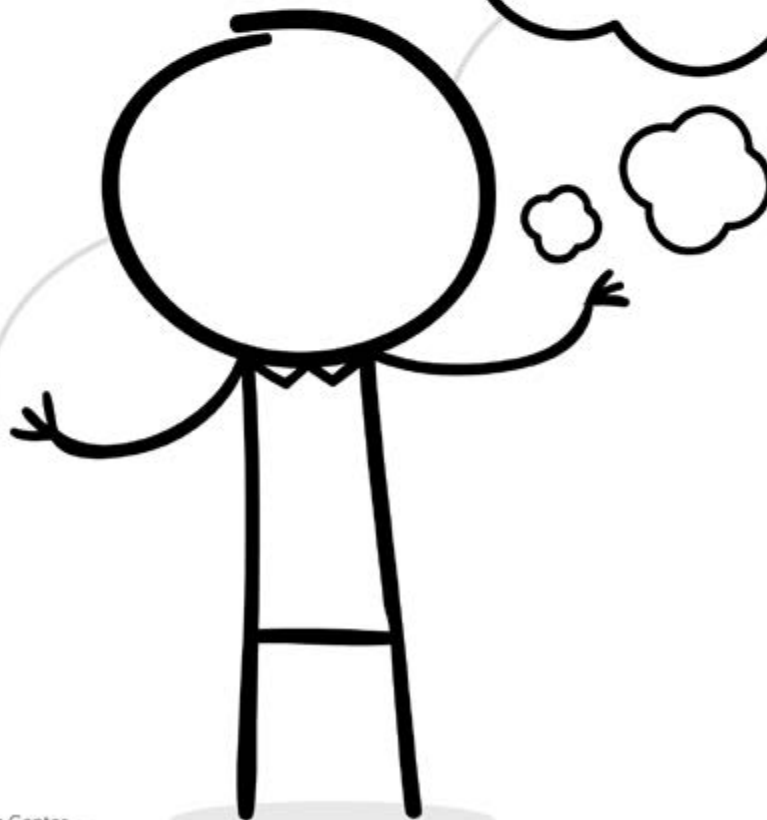
Thoughts and Feelings

Encouraging Dialogue

How are you feeling today? What thoughts are you thinking? Answer these questions below and then draw a face to show how you are feeling. You may wish to share your final project with your class afterwards.

Today I Feel:

I am thinking...



Disaster and Community Crisis Center –
University of Missouri – dcc.missouri.edu

GOAL 2: ESTABLISH A SENSE OF SAFETY

Objective: *Promote and enhance student safety, and provide emotional comfort and support.*

Disaster media coverage may make students feel less safe.

Emotions related to insecurity, such as anxiety and fear, can impact students' ability to concentrate and learn in the classroom. Teachers and school staff can help students by assuring them that they are safe and explaining that many adults and professionals are committed to keeping them safe.

Teachers and school staff can encourage feelings of safety among their students with the following strategies:

Ensure a safe and calm environment. Focus on creating a welcoming environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and experiences. For example, teachers and school staff should ensure that they and their students keep a calm and supportive tone during any discussion about disaster media coverage. Having students sit in a circle may also help to foster a supportive tone.


Provide comfort and support. Explain to students that they are safe and that their family and the adults at school always do everything they can to keep them safe. Make an extra effort to comfort and support students who seem particularly affected by the event. One way to do so is to stick to a normal routine. A predictable schedule can help foster a sense of stability when students feel uneasy.

Encourage disaster planning. Another way to help students cope with disaster media coverage is to encourage disaster planning at home. Teachers and school staff can equip students to create a home disaster plan and to compile a disaster kit with their families (see “Personal Safety Kit” Activity, p. X). These activities can make a family better prepared for an event and can also decrease student and family anxiety. Teachers and school staff can tell students about school and classroom disaster preparedness plans, which can further reassure students that schools are prepared and safe.

Discuss common media practices. Explain to students that the news media often highlight and repeat disturbing scenes, generally showing these more frequently than positive images such as rescue workers helping survivors. Younger children may need a reminder that an event only happened once, even if video of the event is shown repeatedly in the media.

Promote media safety. Teach students that when they are upset by disaster media coverage, they have choices. For instance, they can talk about their feelings with trusted friends or adults, can turn off the TV or internet, or can make a list of the people, activities, and places that make them feel comfortable and safe.

Remind students that there are lots of good things going on in the world. Encourage students to provide examples of the positive events happening in their school, neighborhood, city, or other parts of the world. Some of these good things may be reflected in the news; others might go on quietly behind the scenes. As a group, how long a list can students make?

Focus on community helpers. Highlight how people are supporting each other in response to the event; give specific examples as you are able. Explore with students some of the professions and organizations that work to keep people safe (police officers, fire fighters, FEMA, Red Cross, etc.). For more, see “Community Helper” activity, [page 18](#). 

ACTIVITY:

Media Safety Message Decoder

Establishing a Sense of Safety

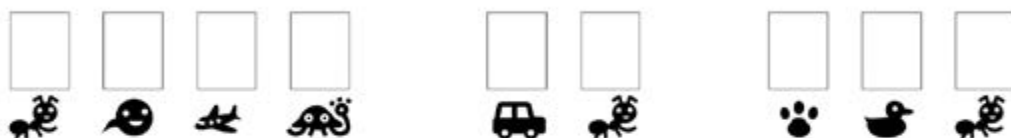
Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teach students that they have options when feeling upset by media coverage of a disaster. → Promote responsible media use.
Age group:	<p>Elementary School (ages 5-11).</p> <p>Younger students may need assistance.</p>
Length of time:	30 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Worksheet: <i>Media Safety Decoder (page 14)</i> → Worksheet Answer Key: <i>Media Safety Decoder (page 15)</i> → Pens or pencils
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduce the topic of media safety to your students. Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Media coverage of disasters can cause different types of feelings for everyone.</i> → <i>Adults may not realize when young people are upset by media images.</i> → <i>We have choices in how and when we watch media coverage of a disaster.</i> 2 Distribute the Media Safety Decoder worksheet to students and read aloud the directions. Allow time for students to complete the activity. 3 Ask students to read their answers aloud and share with them the descriptions from the teacher's key. 4 Discuss specific ways students can try these actions when feeling upset by media coverage of disasters. 5 Encourage students to share their work with their parents.

WORKSHEET:

Media Safety MESSAGE DECODER

Establishing a Sense of Safety

When you see or hear something in the media that makes you feel sad, scared, or angry, there are things that you can do. To learn about some of your choices, use the decoder key to decode the secret messages below!



It is important to share your feelings with someone you love and trust.



You do not have to watch or listen to any media that makes you feel unsafe.



Sometimes it helps to find something else to do.



You might feel better if you express your feelings through drawing, writing, dancing or singing.



Think about places and activities that make you feel happy and safe again.

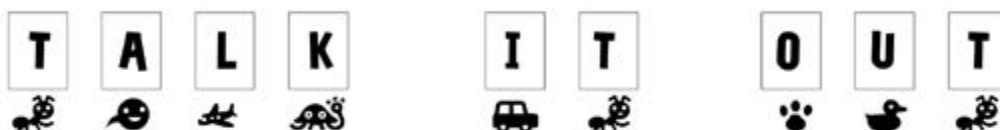
Decoder Key



ANSWER KEY:

Media Safety MESSAGE DECODER

Establishing a Sense of Safety



It is important to share your feelings with someone you love and trust.



You do not have to watch or listen to any media that makes you feel unsafe.



Sometimes it helps to find something else to do.



You might feel better if you express your feelings through drawing, writing, dancing or singing.



Think about places and activities that make you feel happy and safe again.

ACTIVITY:

Media Safety Role-Play

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teach students about common reactions to disaster media coverage and about ways to deal with upsetting disaster media. → Allow students to brainstorm and role-play specific situations where they can try the different suggestions outlined on the Media Safety Role-Play worksheet.
Age group:	Middle and High School (Ages 12-18)
Length of time:	20 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Worksheet: <i>Media Safety Role-Play (page 17)</i> → Pens or pencils
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduce the topic of media safety to your students. Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Disaster media coverage can cause different types of feelings for different people.</i> → <i>As adults we may not realize when we are upset by media images</i> → <i>We have choices in how we can respond.</i> 2 Hand out the <i>Discussing Media Safety</i> worksheet to students and give them time to review it. 3 With the class, brainstorm and then role-play specific scenarios in which students might use the suggested actions. 4 Encourage students to share the <i>Media Safety Role-Play</i> worksheet and activity with their parents.

Media Safety Role-Play

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Know Your Options: When something in the media upsets you, there are things that you can do. Read through these choices and be ready to discuss in class.

Talk it Out	<i>It is normal to have strong emotions when watching coverage of a disaster in the media. Sharing your feelings about the event with someone you trust can help you to feel better.</i>
Turn It Off	<i>You do not have to watch or listen to media that makes you upset. It is OK to ask that it be turned off. People can become wrapped up in the details of a disaster and they often want to watch the same news story over and over. They may not always realize how this makes them or others feel. When you speak up about turning it off, others benefit as well.</i>
Walk Away	<i>If you are somewhere safe, it is OK to walk away and find something else to do. We can often change the way we feel when we change what we are doing.</i>
Be Creative	<i>Sometimes people feel better when they get some exercise, or they find a way to express their feelings through drawing, writing, dancing or singing. What brings you joy? Think about how to use your creative self.</i>
Remember the Good	<i>It may not always be possible to completely tune out the media. If this happens to you, find something enjoyable to do or to think about. You can think about a list of things that you are grateful for, or you can remind yourself that there are adults in the community that work hard to keep you safe.</i>

ACTIVITY:

Community Helpers Word Search and Matching Game

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Activity Goal:	→ Teach students about the different types of helpers in their community and the roles that these helpers play in keeping people safe.
Age group:	Elementary School (ages 5-11). Younger students may need assistance.
Length of time:	30-60 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Worksheet: <i>Community Helpers Word Search (page 19)</i> → Worksheet Answer Key: <i>Community Helpers Word Search (page 20)</i> → Worksheet: <i>Matching Community Helpers (page 21)</i> → Worksheet Answer Key: <i>Matching Community Helpers (page 22)</i> → Optional: <i>School visit from a community helper (fire fighter, police officer, disaster relief worker, legislator, etc.)</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduce the topic of community helpers by explaining to your students that there are adults working in the community to keep people safe. 2 Provide each student with a Community Helper Word Search worksheet. After giving students time to complete the worksheet, invite some discussion: How do these people help to keep us safe? 3 Have students complete the Matching Community Helpers worksheet. Then, read aloud the job description and have students name aloud the correct community helper. 4 If possible, arrange for a firefighter, police officer, or other community helper to share with the class how she and others help to keep the community safe, and to offer tips on what students can do to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. 5 Following the visit, you may consider having the class create cards or a poster for the presenter, thanking her for her visit and listing things the students learned from and liked about the presentation.

WORKSHEET:

Community Helpers WORD SEARCH

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Look for different types of community helpers hidden in the puzzle below.

E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	Y	W	O	R	K	E	R
D	P	A	R	E	N	T	S	F	F	U	X	D	R	O
C	L	N	S	D	O	P	U	C	E	V	D	C	Q	E
B	A	U	B	V	Z	Y	Y	N	T	P	W	H	I	D
R	U	R	M	U	K	A	B	Q	U	O	R	U	Z	M
N	X	S	D	O	C	T	O	R	O	L	R	R	K	Q
T	V	E	W	X	B	E	F	A	U	I	B	C	P	O
F	R	D	X	K	L	L	S	H	P	C	J	H	N	A
H	M	Z	B	D	H	L	V	I	V	E	O	W	P	K
E	F	I	R	E	F	I	G	H	T	E	R	O	U	D
E	Y	G	W	O	D	I	S	K	M	K	R	R	F	S
Y	W	V	P	A	R	A	M	E	D	I	C	K	W	Z
S	A	J	T	R	V	I	C	H	L	V	T	E	N	X
B	G	K	C	O	T	L	E	T	M	H	K	R	Y	Z
S	S	I	M	C	S	H	L	Y	U	R	L	A	N	E

PARAMEDIC
DOCTOR
POLICE

NURSE
EMERGENCY
WORKER

CHURCH WORKER
FIREFIGHTER
PARENTS

Disaster and Community Crisis Center – University of Missouri – dcc.missouri.edu

ANSWER KEY:

Community Helpers WORD SEARCH

Establishing a Sense of Safety

E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	Y	W	O	R	K	E	R
D	P	A	R	E	N	T	S	F	F	U	X	D	R	O
C	L	N	S	D	O	P	U	C	E	V	D	C	Q	E
B	A	U	B	V	Z	Y	Y	N	T	P	W	H	I	D
R	U	R	M	U	K	A	B	Q	U	O	R	U	Z	M
N	X	S	D	O	C	T	O	R	O	L	R	R	K	Q
T	V	E	W	X	B	E	F	A	U	I	B	C	P	O
F	R	D	X	K	L	L	S	H	P	C	J	H	N	A
H	M	Z	B	D	H	L	V	I	V	E	O	W	P	K
E	F	I	R	E	F	I	G	H	T	E	R	O	U	D
E	Y	G	W	O	D	I	S	K	M	K	R	R	F	S
Y	W	V	P	A	R	A	M	E	D	I	C	K	W	Z
S	A	J	T	R	V	I	C	H	L	V	T	E	N	X
B	G	K	C	O	T	L	E	T	M	H	K	R	Y	Z
S	S	I	M	C	S	H	L	Y	U	R	L	A	N	E

WORKSHEET:

Community Helpers MATCHING GAME

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Match the community helpers on the left to their descriptions on the right.

Paramedics

These people help when there is trouble. Sometimes they find people who have broken the law and put them in jail. They also help with car accidents and other emergencies.

Police

These are the people you live with who raise you and keep you safe. It is important to talk with these people if you have questions or are feeling scared or sad about a recent disaster.

**Doctors
and Nurses**

These people often drive ambulances and are the first helpers to arrive on the scene if 9-1-1 is called and there is a serious illness or injury involved.

**Emergency
Workers**

These people are specially trained to help a community after a hurricane, tornado, or other disaster, and will sometimes come from another community to share food and supplies and to keep people safe.

**Church/Temple
Workers**

These people put out fires and helps with other scary situations like car accidents. They also teach the community about fire safety and prevention.

Firefighters

You may find these people at a hospital or medical clinic. They are trained to make sure you feel better quickly when you are sick or get hurt.

**Parents and
Guardians**

These people help others pray or find spiritual guidance when they are frightened or sad about a recent disaster. They often open up their building as a safe place for people to go when they need shelter.

ANSWER KEY:

Community Helpers MATCHING GAME

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Match the community helpers on the left to their descriptions on the right.

Paramedics

Police

**Doctors
and Nurses**

**Emergency
Workers**

**Church/Temple
Workers**

Firefighters

**Parents and
Guardians**

These people help when there is trouble. Sometimes they find people who have broken the law and put them in jail. They also help with car accidents and other emergencies.

These are the people you live with who raise you and keep you safe. It is important to talk with these people if you have questions or are feeling scared or sad about a recent disaster.

These people often drive ambulances and are the first helpers to arrive on the scene if 9-1-1 is called and there is a serious illness or injury involved.

These people are specially trained to help a community after a hurricane, tornado, or other disaster, and will sometimes come from another community to share food and supplies and to keep people safe.

These people put out fires and helps with other scary situations like car accidents. They also teach the community about fire safety and prevention.

You may find these people at a hospital or medical clinic. They are trained to make sure you feel better quickly when you are sick or get hurt.

These people help others pray or find spiritual guidance when they are frightened or sad about a recent disaster. They often open up their building as a safe place for people to go when they need shelter.

ACTIVITY:

Community Disaster Preparedness Project

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Allow student groups to research how to prepare for different types of disasters and to share this new knowledge with their peers.</i> → <i>Promote students' confidence in their ability to prepare for disasters.</i>
Age group:	Middle and High School (Ages 12-18)
Length of time:	30-60 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Poster board, markers, scissors, glue and magazines, or computers with webcam and basic document-creating software such as Microsoft Word.</i> → <i>Several computers with internet access</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduce the topic of disaster preparedness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Explain to students that the purpose of this activity is to learn about what to do in case of an emergency, to help them feel confident in their ability to help others prepare for a disaster.</i> 2 Break the class into small groups of 4-5 students, and encourage each group to pick one disaster to learn more about. You may want to have a list of common disasters up on the board for groups to choose from. Ensure that each group has a different (and appropriate) disaster to study. 3 Allow students some time to discuss and research their disaster online. Have each group make a list of 4 to 7 practical recommendations for how to prepare for their selected disaster. 4 Have students create a presentation, poster, and/or a short video on disaster preparedness, featuring a brief description of the disaster and their recommendations for how to prepare. 5 When all projects are complete, students may present these to the rest of the class or to the entire school. Their work can also be shared in a school newsletter or announcements, or displayed in the community.

ACTIVITY:

My Personal Safety Kit

Establishing a Sense of Safety

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teach students how to create a personal safety kit that can be used in times of disaster. → Encourage dialogue between students and their families about creating a personal safety kit.
Age group:	Elementary and Middle School (Ages 5-13)
Length of time:	15-30 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Worksheet: <i>My Safety Kit</i> (page 25 and page 26) ↗ → Scissors, glue, crayons, markers or colored pencils. → Blank paper for drawing additional safety kit items → Optional: <i>Magazines or catalogues for collaging</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduce the topic of disaster preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Share that the purpose of the activity is to learn about how to assemble a personal safety kit, so that students and their families can be better prepared if an emergency happens.</i> 2 Describe to students how they can create their own personal safety kits. In addition to placing the recommended items into their kits, students can also draw pictures of other items they think they should include. When they have finished adding these items to their personal safety kits, students are encouraged to decorate their kits in whatever ways they would like. 3 For a variation with older students, you may give them magazines and let them create a collage with their kits. 4 Distribute worksheets featuring kits and recommended items (page 25 and page 26) ↗ to students along with scissors, glue, and any other art supplies. 5 Allow students time to complete their projects. 6 Afterwards, have students share their finished projects with the class and to discuss the items they put in their personal safety kits. 7 Have students take home their completed personal safety kits to show their family members. Encourage students to discuss creating a safety kit at home.

My Personal SAFETY KIT

Establishing a Sense of Safety

How well prepared are you for a disaster? Fill this empty case with the safety supplies you'll need, and then you'll be ready with your own personal safety kit. See the next page for some common items that many people put into their kit. Cut out the safety supplies you find and paste them into this suitcase. You can also use crayons or markers to draw other items you want to include. Don't forget to take your personal safety kit home to show your family!



Disaster and Community Crisis Center – University of Missouri – dcc.missouri.edu

My Personal SAFETY KIT

Establishing a Sense of Safety



GOAL 3: PROMOTE COPING SKILLS

Objective: *Help students identify and learn coping skills*

Students who have good coping skills may be better equipped to address their own reactions to disaster media coverage.

Teachers and school staff can promote healthy coping skills with the following strategies:

Explain coping skills. Education about coping skills should be age-appropriate and should explain that coping can take both helpful and harmful forms:

Helpful coping skills involve activities that help one feel better and cause no harm to oneself or others. Such skills may include deep breathing and other relaxation methods, avoiding distressing media, and sharing concerns with a trusted adult.

Harmful coping skills, on the other hand, may cause harm to oneself or others. These include repeatedly viewing graphic disaster-related images or “bottling up” one’s anxiety until negative behaviors emerge.

Make coping a part of the normal routine. Provide time for students to cope and express their feelings creatively through drawing, acting, playing, or singing. Structured time for deep breathing or other activities allow students to de-stress and relax.

Help disaster survivors. Following a disaster, students often feel a loss of control that can increase their anxiety. Volunteering is a way that students can regain a sense of control. If a disaster is nearby, explore with students how they might volunteer their support in age appropriate ways. Even if the disaster is far away, students might engage in classroom activities such as fundraising, preparing care kits, or making cards for survivors (see **page 30** and **page 31**). ↴

Be aware. Recognize the warning signs of a more serious stress reaction and find out how to obtain help for a student when needed. Talk with a student’s parents if he is having difficulties and/or refer him to a school counselor or social worker if needed. Not every student will react the same way to a situation, so be aware of any signs of severe distress in children and youth. See “Guidelines for Helping Students in Distress” (**page II** ↴) for more information.

Relaxation Practice

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teach children and adolescents simple body relaxation and deep breathing techniques. → Introduce an activity that can help students relax and refocus when strong emotions distract them from their classwork.
Age group:	K-12 (Ages 5-18)
Length of time:	20 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Relaxation Practice Leader's Guide (page 29) ↗ → Quiet setting → Optional: Soft music
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Start by creating a quiet environment in your classroom. Close the doors and silence phones to avoid outside distractions. Tell students that they are going to do a relaxation activity and that they should find a quiet and comfortable place to sit. You may want to dim lights and/or put on calm instrumental music. 2 Introduce the relaxation activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Explain to students that the Relaxation Practice activity can help them work through difficult emotions. → Define roles with students by explaining that your job is to guide a relaxation exercise and that their job is to sit quietly, listen, and follow along. 3 Take a moment to address any student questions or concerns. 4 Read the <i>Relaxation Practice</i> worksheet aloud to students. Do your best to use a calm, slow, and soft voice to encourage a relaxed state for your students. 5 Open the floor for discussion after the activity by asking questions like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How do you feel after the relaxation practice? → Would you like to do this activity again? → What are other ways to calm down when feeling upset?

Relaxation Practice

Begin by sitting comfortably in your chair. You may wish to close your eyes. Notice your feet resting on the floor. Place one hand in your lap and one hand over the center of your belly.

Slowly and deeply take a breath in through your nose. Imagine that there is a balloon inside of your stomach. With every in breath count to three in your head as if a balloon is filling with air, and with every out breath count to three as if the balloon is deflating.

Continue breathing in this way. Breathe in (2... 3...), and out (2... 3...). Keep your shoulders still and allow your belly to do all of the work. Any time your mind starts to wander away, just bring your thoughts back to your breathing and your counting.

Now, we are going to work on relaxing our muscles. We're going to start with the muscles in our face. When I say breathe in, we are going to tighten up all the muscles in our face as tight as we can for the count of 3 and then release and relax all of your face muscles when you breathe out for the count of 3. Let's repeat that together a couple more times.

Next we move to our neck, tightening as we breathe in for 1... 2... 3... and then relax as we breathe out for 1... 2... 3... [Note: here and below, repeat as feels natural]

Next we draw our shoulders up to our ears and tighten for 1... 2... 3..., then relax and breathe out for 1... 2... 3....

Now, on the next in breath, we'll make a fist and tighten up all of the muscles in our arms as tight as we can for 1... 2... 3..., and then relax and let go for 1... 2... 3....

On the next in breath, let's tighten up our stomach (1... 2... 3...) and relax (1... 2... 3...).

Then we lift our legs up out of the seat and tighten our legs for 1... 2... 3... and gently put them down and breathe out for 1... 2... 3....

Now, tighten our whole body as tight as we can for 1... 2... 3... and release (1... 2... 3...).

One more final deep breath in as we tighten for 1... 2... 3... and relax (1... 2... 3...).

We will sit in silence with our eyes closed as we continue to breathe deeply for a few more moments. Feel free to tighten and relax any part of your body that still feels tight.

Note: Adjust time according to age and developmental level. When students become fidgety, it is time to end the activity.

Now, with your next in breath, start to wiggle your fingers and toes. When you're ready, you can open your eyes. Remember that this practice is always available anytime you need it. Some people find it really helpful when they are having a tough time or feeling a strong emotion. You can also practice just the breathing whenever you want.

Conclude by initiating quiet discussion.


ACTIVITY:

Showing Support Greeting Cards

Promoting Coping Skills

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Create and send cards of support, encouragement, or condolences to survivors of a recent disaster.</i> → <i>Show students tangible ways that they can provide emotional support to disaster survivors and make positive contributions to those in need.</i>
Age group:	Elementary and Middle School (Ages 5-13)
Length of time:	30 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Envelopes, blank cards or construction paper</i> → <i>Scissors, glue, glitter, stickers, markers, crayons, colored pencils or other crafting materials</i> → <i>Box with postage to ship students' cards</i> → <i>Contact person able to receive and distribute cards</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Prior to the activity, identify an appropriate contact in the disaster-affected community who can distribute students' cards to affected individuals/families. This might be a school or hospital, a disaster response agency like FEMA, or an emergency shelter. 2 Introduce the Greeting Cards activity to students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Explain that students will have the opportunity to create cards to offer support to survivors of the recent disaster</i> → <i>Hold classroom discussion. You may want to ask students if they can think of times in their lives where they were feeling anxious or upset, but were able to feel a little better when they helped someone else.</i> → <i>Ask students if they have any questions or concerns.</i> 3 Distribute art supplies and assist students in preparing the cards as needed. 4 It is important to let the students be a part of the mailing process. If you have more than one possible place to send the cards, allow each child the opportunity to choose where his or her card will go, and let them address and decorate the envelopes. 5 With students' permission, take a picture of each student's card and send the photos home to their parents.

Showing Support Fundraiser

Activity Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ <i>To provide an opportunity for students to collect money, canned goods, emergency supplies, or other donations to share with survivors of a recent disaster.</i> ➔ <i>To show students tangible ways that they can provide support to survivors of disasters and talk about how helping others often makes us feel better as well.</i>
Age group:	Middle and High School (Ages 12-18)
Length of time:	20-60 minutes
Materials needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ <i>Showing Support Fundraiser sample flier (page 32) </i> ➔ <i>Chalk and chalkboard for writing ideas</i> ➔ <i>Paper bags or boxes to transport goods to selected organization.</i> ➔ <i>Optional: Interactive whiteboard with internet</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Start a conversation with students about the recent disaster. Ask students to brainstorm how the class could help the affected community by holding a fundraising drive. Inform the brainstorming session by visiting http://www.redcross.org/support or other online sites to determine local needs and how best to help. (It will be most helpful to connect this project with an identified need and helping organization in the affected community.) 2 Consider the following discussion points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ <i>Possible organizations to support</i> ➔ <i>List of appropriate supplies</i> ➔ <i>Other resources you might need and how to secure them</i> ➔ <i>Specifics involved with transfer of funds or supplies to the selected organization.</i> 3 After students select a drive or fundraising event, create a detailed flyer about the event, and send home to parents to solicit their help. 4 You may also want to get the rest of the school involved or contact local media sources to bring community awareness to your event. 5 Hold the drive or fundraiser. 6 Initiate classroom discussion afterwards. Ask students how it felt to be part of such an event, if they learned anything new, etc.

SAMPLE FLIER:

Showing Support FUNDRAISER

Promoting Coping Skills

Canned Food Drive

*In order to help families impacted by the recent flood,
Anytown Elementary's 5th grade class
is holding a canned food drive.*



Details:

When: _____

Where: _____

What: _____

How I can help: _____

THANK YOU *for your assistance in making this event a
success for our students and for those in need!*

Disaster and Community Crisis Center – University of Missouri – dcc.missouri.edu

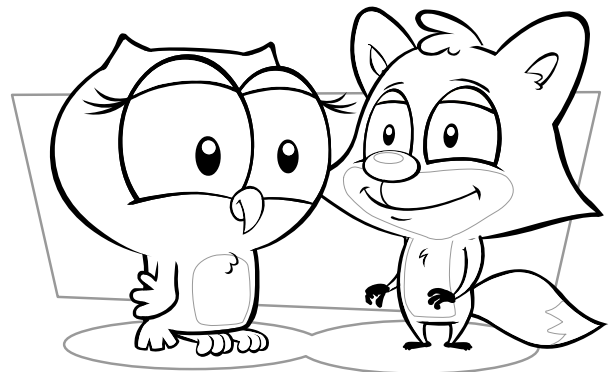
ACTIVITY:

Building Resilience with Hunter and Eve

Promoting Coping Skills

Activity Goal:	→ <i>To promote coping skills and resilience with students</i>
Age group:	Elementary and Middle School (Ages 5-13)
Length of time:	15-30 minutes
Materials needed:	→ <i>Hunter and Eve videos, discussion starters and activity worksheets found at: http://tdc.missouri.edu/hunter-eve</i>
Directions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Follow the link above to review and select which Hunter and Eve video(s) and corresponding activities you would like to share. 2 Print the worksheet activities, one per student. 3 Read aloud the pre-video discussion starters to your class and allow time for students to respond to the questions. 4 Show selected Hunter and Eve video(s). 5 Read aloud post-video discussion starters and allow time for students to respond to the questions. 6 Distribute worksheet activities and provide classroom time for completion.

Building Resilience with Hunter and Eve is a cartoon series that provides instruction on building resilience and coping skills with students. In each video, Hunter (a squirrel) encounters a new challenge or difficulty and Eve (an owl) provides guidance and instruction on adapting and developing positive coping skills. Each video is accompanied by discussion starters and supplemental activities that reinforce the instruction provided in the video.



ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT DMI

Q ***Question:** What if a student asks a question and I don't know the answer?*

Answer: It's OK to say you don't know. You might say something like, "That's a really good question. I don't know the answer myself, but there are people working very hard to answer questions like these and to make sure we're safe. We can continue to talk about this over time and if I do find out an answer to that question I will be sure to let you know."

Q ***Question:** What if a student has a strong emotional reaction?*

Answer: If showing your support for a student doesn't seem to be enough to help the student, or if their emotional response becomes distracting to their school work or to other students, it is a good idea to get the school counselor and the student's parents involved to figure out how best to help the student.

Q ***Question:** What if a student shows no reaction at all?*

Answer: This is OK. We all have different life experiences and these experiences shape how we respond to the world around us. It is important to allow each student to express their response to the event in their own way.

Q ***Question:** What if a student's parents have concerns about the class discussing media coverage of a disaster?*

Answer: If there is parental concern about discussing the media coverage of the crisis at school, encourage open dialogue with that parent. After listening to their concerns, inform parents of the DMI process to guide class discussion, and remind them that students are likely to be exposed to disasters with or without guided class discussions, through various media sources and conversations with peers. Openly discussing the disaster and addressing students' emotional responses and questions can often ease a student's anxiety. Conversely, avoiding the subject (or leaving the conversation to students and their peers) may increase their distress. Children often follow adults' cues about whether or not it is "safe" to talk about a subject and it is important to communicate to children (and parents) that it is OK to have these conversations, even if they are sometimes difficult.

TEACHER AND SCHOOL STAFF GUIDELINES FOR HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Signs of severe distress in students may include:

Confusion	Memory gaps, disrupted thinking, poor concentration
Physical Agitation	Excessive restlessness, rigid stillness
Speech Agitation	Very rapid speech, preoccupation with one idea or thought
Emotional Responses	Crying, hysteria, lack of emotion, or inappropriate excitement

Teachers and school staff can provide emotional support to students experiencing distress by using the following strategies:

- ➔ **Project calmness, encouragement, and acceptance, and maintain a nonjudgmental attitude about the situation and the student’s reaction.** *Speak in a calm voice or nod your head to show a student encouragement.*
- ➔ **Provide active listening by maintaining eye contact, offering empathic responses, and validating the feelings expressed by the student.** *Validation can be accomplished by reflective comments that acknowledge the student’s feelings, as well as by normalizing comments that remind the student that her responses are reasonable and common in such situations. For instance, you might say “It sounds like you are feeling angry that so many people have gotten hurt, and that’s okay – lots of people feel that way when things like this happen.”*
- ➔ **Promote physical comfort via closeness.** *Show physical comfort with a hug when appropriate or by providing a tissue if a student is crying.*
- ➔ **Validate the courage it took the student to express his/her feelings.** *You might say: “I appreciate you sharing what you’re going through. It takes a lot of courage to talk about how you’re feeling.”*

Referrals for Further Assessment and Intervention

When students are very upset about disaster media coverage, consider referring them to the school counselor or social worker. After a traumatic event like a disaster—even one that happens far away from the school, but is featured in the news—schools may want to establish plans that help teachers easily refer students who are particularly upset about the events to specialists who can provide individual or group care for those students.

A SELF-CARE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Providing instruction and support to students can be rewarding, but it can also be physically and emotionally exhausting, especially when disasters or other stressors are involved. The following information provides warning signs for excessive stress, and offers self-care tips to consider when providing instruction and support for students.

Common Signs of Stress:

- *Difficulty sleeping or excessive fatigue*
- *Increased irritability with students or school staff*
- *Feeling overwhelmed or easily agitated*
- *Losing interest in once enjoyable activities*
- *Becoming isolated or socially withdrawn*
- *Substance use and abuse*

Self-care tips for teachers and school staff:

- **Find a positive support system:** *Seek out and give support to fellow teachers and staff.*
- **Practice self-compassion:** *Remember that how you perceive a situation – and particularly how you think about yourself – can greatly impact how well you manage stress.*
- **Take time to relax:** *Even one minute of simple deep breathing and calming techniques can provide significant relief from stress.*
- **Stay positive:** *Increase activities that are positive and you enjoy.*
- **Stay healthy:**
 - › **Consider nutritional intake:** *Avoid meals lacking in nutrients but don't skip meals.*
 - › **Create a sleep routine:** *Try your best to get a full night's sleep, follow a bedtime routine, and wake up and go to bed at the same times each day.*
 - › **Stay active:** *Even walking for a few minutes per day, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or doing a simple yoga pose during a work break can create a big difference in how you feel.*
 - › **Avoid substance use and limit caffeine.**

If you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed for more than two weeks, it may be time to reach out for help. Contact a trusted friend or family member, or seek the services of a mental health professional. Remember that feeling overwhelmed is a normal response to stress, not a sign of weakness. You do not have to go through it alone. Reaching out for help is just another healthy step you can take towards self-care.

SCHOOL POLICY ON DISASTER MEDIA COVERAGE

Disasters and other traumatic events may occur during school hours. For example, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks occurred while many children in the U.S. were in school. Because classrooms often have televisions and internet access, school administrators should determine in advance their policies on student access to live news coverage of a disaster or terrorist attack.

If students are allowed to watch disaster or other potentially frightening events, then teachers, counselors, social workers, and other school staff should be available to answer students' questions about what happened and to provide comfort and assurances of safety. If schools are not able to provide this support, then schools should consider not allowing students to watch such events.

Younger students (generally under 8 years old) may have difficulty comprehending news coverage that is intended for adults. As such, we recommend preventing younger students from watching disaster media coverage. Whatever a school decides, school administrators are encouraged to develop a disaster media policy that applies to the entire school or school district. The policy should address all students in the school. This will prevent individual teachers from having to decide on a case-by-case basis whether to allow students to watch disaster news.

Particularly given the proliferation of smartphones, a school policy that does not allow students to watch media coverage of traumatic events in school does not mean those students will not find out about what happened, even during school hours.

With that in mind, teachers and other school personnel should assume that most or all children are likely to have at least some awareness of a disaster on the day following an event. As such, while school personnel may succeed in reducing the volume of live disaster media coverage, students may still need a range of emotional and informational support from teachers and staff to deal with their reactions to the news.

At times, particularly with younger children, discussing an event as a class may be better than allowing students to watch disaster media firsthand. There may be no way to prevent students from finding out about "bad news," but school personnel can be ready to help students process and cope with such events.

Helping Students Cope with Disaster Media Coverage

In response to the recent disaster that has been covered in the media, your child's class has participated/will participate in the Disaster Media Intervention (DMI)* activities, an evidence-informed intervention designed to help prevent or reduce distress related to disaster media coverage.

DMI focuses on the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Encourage Dialogue

Objective: Encourage students to talk about their feelings and concerns with a trusted adult.

Goal 2: Establish a Sense of Safety

Objective: Promote and enhance student safety, and provide emotional comfort and support.

Goal 3: Develop Coping Skills

Objective: Help students identify and learn coping skills.

"Helping Your Child Cope with Media Coverage of Disasters: A Fact Sheet for Parents" can be downloaded from http://dcc.missouri.edu/doc/products/disaster_media_factsheet_for_parents_dcc.pdf

This fact sheet provides an overview of how media coverage of a disaster may affect your child, and suggests strategies that parents can use to address these effects.

For more information on the DMI and resources to enhance mental and behavioral health in response to disasters, visit the Disaster and Community Crisis Center at dcc.missouri.edu.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resources for talking with children about media coverage of a disaster:

Helping students cope with media coverage of disasters: A fact sheet for teachers and school staff.

Disaster and Community Crisis Center and the University of Missouri.

http://dcc.missouri.edu/doc/products/disaster_media_factsheet_for_schools_dcc.pdf

Knowledge empowers! *Ready.gov*

<http://www.ready.gov/kids/educators>

A national tragedy: Helping children cope: Tips for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists.*

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/terror_general.aspx

Talking to children about violence: Tips for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists.*

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf

Talking to your children about 9/11. *National September 11 Memorial & Museum.*

http://www.911memorial.org/sites/all/files/TalkingToChildren_FINAL4.pdf

Resources for disaster preparedness

Disney friends for change: Get prepared action kit. *Red Cross.*

http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m38040129_FFC14-ARC-Get_Prepared.pdf

Disney's Mickey and Friends Disaster Preparedness Activity Book. *Red Cross.*

<http://public-static.disneystorycentral.com/ddb/redcross/9781423198451/index.html>

Let's get ready tool kits. *Sesame Street for Parents.*

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits>

Preparedness education activities: The pillow case project and masters of disaster. *Red Cross.*

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/school/preparedness-education>

Resources for supporting children after a disaster

Skills for psychological recovery (SPR). *National Child Traumatic Stress Network.*

<http://www.nctsn.org/content/skills-psychological-recovery-spr>

Psychological first aid for schools: Field operations guide, 2nd Edition. *National Child Traumatic Stress Network.*

<http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid-schoolspfa>

Cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma in schools. *Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools.*

<https://cbitsprogram.org>

Crisis and school safety: Talking to children about violence: Information for parents and educators. *National Association of School Psychologists.*

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisedPDFs/talkingviolence.pdf>

Culturally competent crisis response: Information for school psychologists and crisis teams.

National Association of School Psychologists.

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/culturalcompetence/cc_crisis.aspx

Healing after trauma skills (HATS). *National Association of School Psychologists.* http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/edu_materials/HATS2ndEdition.pdf

Helping children rebound: Strategies for preschool teachers. *Teaching Strategies, Inc.*

<http://www2.teachingstrategies.com/content/pageDocs/Helping-Children-Rebound-PS-2012.pdf>

The handbook of frequently asked questions following traumatic events: Violence, disasters, or terrorism.

Children's National Medical Center.

<http://childrensnational.org/~media/cnhs-site/files/resources/ichoc/handbook.ashx?la=en>

Listen, protect, connect: Psychological first aid (PFA) for students and teachers. *Ready.gov* http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PFA_SchoolCrisis.pdf

Responding to natural disasters: Helping children and families: Information for school crisis teams. *National Association of School Psychologists.*

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/naturaldisaster_teams_ho.pdf

Teacher guidelines for crisis response: A practical guide for crisis response in our schools. *The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.*

<http://www.schoolcrisisresponse.com/teacherguidelines.pdf>

Teacher guidelines for helping students after a tornado. *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.* http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/teachers_talk_to_students_about_tornadoes.pdf

Teachers helping students: Listening and talking. *Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress.*

http://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_teachers_helping_students.pdf

Tips for talking to children and youth after traumatic events: A guide for parents and educators. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).* <http://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-talking-to-children-after-traumatic-event.pdf>

Tips for talking with and helping children and youth cope after a disaster or traumatic event: A guide for parents, caregivers, and teachers. *SAMHSA.*

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/KEN01-0093R/KEN01-0093R.pdf>

Trauma-informed approach and trauma-specific interventions. *SAMHSA.*

<http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma>

REFERENCES

- American Counseling Association (n.d.). Disaster and trauma responses in children. Retrieved from <http://www.counseling.org/sub/dmh/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Disaster%20and%20Trauma%20Responses%20of%20Children.pdf>
- Houston, J. B., Rosenholtz, C. E., & Weisbrod, J. L. (2011). Helping students cope with media coverage of disasters: A fact sheet for teachers and school staff. Retrieved from http://dcc.missouri.edu/doc/products/disaster_media_factsheet_for_schools_dcc.pdf
- Joshi, P. T., Lewin, S. M., & O'Donnell, D. A. (2005). The handbook of frequently asked questions following traumatic events: Violence, disasters, or terrorism. Retrieved from <http://childrensnational.org/~media/cnhs-site/files/resources/ichoc/handbook.ashx?la=en>
- Lazarus, P. J., Limmerson, S. R., & Brock, S. E. (2003). Responding to natural disasters: Helping children and families: Information for school crisis teams. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/naturaldisaster_teams_ho.pdf
- Raundalen, M., Schultz, J-H., & Langballe, A. (2012). Suggestions for how teachers can protect students in connection with the 22 July terror trial in Oslo, 2012: Reflections on protection and involvement. Retrieved from <http://www.nkvts.no/fu/Documents/Educational-FirstAid-Trial.pdf>
- Schultz, J-H., & Raundalen M. (2012). Educational first aid in crisis: Input on how to communicate with students about the terrorist bomb attack in Oslo and the mass murder in Utoya in 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.nkvts.no/fu/Documents/Educational-FirstAid-School-Start.pdf>
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (n.d.). Teachers helping students: Listening and talking. Retrieved from http://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_teachers_helping_students.pdf