

How to Support Students /Children Affected by the Manila Hostage Incident

Q & A

Q.1	What should an affected school do?
	<p><u>Risk assessment</u> Examine as soon as possible whether there are teachers or students affected by the incident (such as victims, eye-witnesses, survivors with relatives or friends who got injured or died, those who exhibit emotional problems after watching the media report).</p> <p><u>Arrange appropriate support</u> Activate the School Crisis Management Team (CMT) to work out a plan of actions and support such as emotional first-aid for teachers, proper dissemination of information, group or individual debriefing/counselling, identification of at-risk students and referral of severe cases for professional help.</p>
Q.2	How can a teacher with no professional training in counselling handle their students' psychological problems?
	<p>Teachers are not expected to play the role of a psychotherapist. They can play the important role of helping their students ventilate their emotions, delivering positive messages to them, identifying seriously disturbed students and referring them to professionals for counselling services.</p> <p>An important function of schools after a traumatic incident is to provide a safe and familiar environment for their students and helping them to stabilize their emotions.</p> <p>Tips for teachers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remain calm and stabilize your own emotion 2. Listen to and accept your students' feelings 3. Conduct class period for debriefing and/or small group counselling when necessary 4. Arrange teaching or special activities to help students release their distress and to understand the incident from multiple perspectives, e.g. reading/telling stories, drawing, writing, debating, analyzing newspaper cuttings, making cards and booklets of condolences
Q.3	Do students of different ages have different reactions?
	<p>Sudden traumatic incident can bring about different emotional reactions (e.g. shock, sadness, anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, etc.) among students. Adults need to use age appropriate vocabulary and media (such as pictures, stories, games, puppet shows, etc.) to explain to them and help them ventilate their emotions, especially for the younger ones who have limited expressive language abilities. Teachers can arrange suitable teaching or support activities according to students' age to help them. For details, please refer to "How to Cope with Traumatic Incidents — Suggestions for Schools/Teachers/Parents" on EDB website (http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=4332&langno=1)</p>
Q.4	What do parents need to know?
	<p>Children look to their significant others for guidance and support. They can easily be affected by adult's thinking and emotion states regarding the incident.</p>

	<p>Tips for parents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remain calm, handle own emotions appropriately first 2. Avoid magnifying myths and rumors, deliver accurate messages and allow exposure to selective media reports to meet children’s need if required 3. Listen to and accept children’s emotions (such as shock, doubts and fear) 4. Stay more with children, attend to their concerns and re-build a sense of security 5. Pay more attention to children’s behavioural or emotional changes 6. Arrange activities to help children release their distress and understand facts through reading/telling stories, drawing and writing, etc. 7. Adopt a positive attitude, channel negative emotions into positive actions e.g. participate in memorial activities or community services
Q.5	Will this incident have lasting psychological effect on my child?
	<p>Children may have short term emotional reactions e.g. feeling insecure, fearful, cry easily, etc. While these responses vary from one person to another, they are normal reactions. Parents need not over-worry. Spend more time with your children and reassure them that they are living in a safe place. Given ample love, care, recognition and support, children have the ability to resume normal life gradually. If children still exhibit unstable emotion after a considerable period of time (such as a few weeks), parents should contact the school’s student guidance personnel.</p>
Q.6	If my child feels shocked (has nightmares, is afraid of darkness, dares not go out, etc.), what should I do?
	<p>Research findings indicate that children are weak in coping with traumatic incident. Parents should show concern and listen to their feelings. Do not blame or deny their fear by making remarks such as, “There is nothing to feel afraid of”, “Boys are not fearful”, etc. Parents should encourage their children to talk about their inner feelings and give them support. For example, tell the children, “If you are afraid of sleeping alone, I can keep you company.” Parents can also teach children to do relaxation exercises or practise deep-breathing to release their stress.</p>
Q.7	How should I respond to children’s doubt or fear about death?
	<p>You may tell your children that, “This is an unfortunate incident. This classmate has passed away and will not return to school, yet he will rest in peace. Although we all feel sad and hurt, we should learn to treasure life, live positively and take good care of ourselves, family members and friends”.</p>
Q.8	My family is now having a stressful, difficult time. What should I do?
	<p>Maintain a positive attitude, hold onto the belief that the problems are only temporary and there must be a way to solve them. You can also share your feelings with your trusted relatives and friends or seek help from professionals (such as social workers, counsellors) and related organisations.</p>