

Announcements for Student or Staff Deaths

For this segment, if you have one, refer to the Crisis Resource Manual page on announcements. Read those pages on the announcement so you have the background in this philosophy. Then read the first announcement below, allowing small group discussion. Ask each small group to have someone take notes so you can generate the whole list on the board at the end of the group discussion time.

Here is your introduction to the activity:

I'm going to read an announcement for a death of a student. We'd like teachers to read announcements when these things happen, and then lead a brief discussion in the classroom. Remember, you don't have to be a counselor to do this! Kids just need you to listen and clarify. Be compassionate. Some of what they'll talk about won't necessarily HAVE a "right" answer. Let's look at what concerns you might have.

This is the announcement to read:

Students, we have tragic news to give you this morning. One of our students, Billy Jones, died last night when the car he was in was struck by a train. We will probably hear more about this in the next day or two and will keep information coming as we are able to confirm that it is true with either police or the family.

When things like this happen, we have all different kinds of reactions. Some of us might feel shock, sadness, fear or anger. Some of us, especially if we didn't know Billy, might not have much of an emotional reaction at all. Those reactions might rise and fall over coming days. The important thing is for us not to judge one another's reactions because we really don't know what someone feels on the inside. Some of us might want time alone, or to be able to talk to a favorite teacher or your counselor.

We've set aside room in the library for kids who want to do cards and letters for the family or just want to be able to share memories with one another for awhile. We'll return to academics in the classroom when most of us are ready for that. For now, let's talk a little about this.

- *How many of you had already heard about this?*
- *What have you heard? (Clarify fact from rumor.)*
- *How many of you have had a family member die?*
- *What was it like for your family? What did people do that helped? Hurt?*

Ask them to have someone in each small group take notes, and encourage them to consider these questions. You might write them on the board for them.

What about having teachers do announcements sounds like a good idea?

What parts bring about some discomfort?

What questions/comments might kids have with this that would be difficult?

- For instance, some kids might express anger toward the driver for carelessness, when we don't really know enough about what happened to know.
- Some students might assume that the driver had been drinking.
- Lots of other possibilities

What do you most dread?

- Often it is their own ability to do this without being overemotional.

How can administrators/counselors help you feel stronger in this?