

Student Mental Health and Well-Being



TCDSB Mental Health Services provided by **Psychology, Social Work, and Guidance** personnel

Supporting our Children in Times of Crisis

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the heartbreaking tragedy in Toronto on April 23, 2018. This crisis will impact many people in many different ways. It is important to take care of ourselves as well as our young people. It is equally important to remember our Catholic faith and beliefs during such a time of crisis.

While there is much yet unknown about the tragic incident in which a vehicle struck, injured and killed many people in Toronto today, there is already much concern, distress and mourning across our country. Regardless of the circumstances, children and youth can be affected by such tragic events for many reasons. They may have first-hand knowledge of persons who were injured or killed. They may also be exposed through extensive media and internet coverage. Children's natural resilience plays an important protective role, but trauma and extreme stress and anxiety can interfere with their learning and well-being. Families and educators can support children by establishing a sense of safety and security, helping them to process their thoughts and feelings, reinforcing their resilience and strengths, building positive connections within the school community, placing events in the proper context, and providing any needed mental health supports.

We're pleased to send you the May edition of the Student Mental Health and Well-Being Newsletter.

Please feel free to share and pass it along!

Tips for Supporting Children and Youth after a Crisis Event

Pray Together. Prayer for people who are suffering honours them and provides people an opportunity to help others in a tragic event. Prayer opens us to hear what God is calling us to do in tragic and unsettling times. Prayer is a way to find clarity in the chaos around us by turning to God when we feel pain and anxiety. Prayer grounds us in God's mission and reminds us that God is active in the world.

Be reassuring. Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Your reactions are most important. Recognize that some children may be concerned about something bad happening to themselves, family or friends. Explain to them the safety measures in place and reassure them that you and other adults will take care of them.

Be a good listener and observer. Let children guide you to learn how concerned they are or how much information they need. If they are not focused on the tragedy, do not dwell on it. However, be available to answer their questions to the best of your ability.



Focus on the SCHOOL:

The TCDSB Pastoral Plan 2015-18 “Together with one Voice: Harmonizing Our Faith Through Family, Parish, and School” 2018 focuses on the SCHOOL

Family, Parish and School – Unity in Diversity...

Though it is our goal to highlight in depth each community of faith from the educational “village” of family, parish and school every year, it is imperative for us to remember that each of these communities is not simply a discordant or isolated entity; instead, each with the richness of its diversity adds greatness to the harmony of God’s music of love. In other words, the unity of the whole (family, parish and school) does not and should not undermine the uniqueness of the individual. This relationship of unity in diversity reflects St. Paul’s notion of many parts, one body (1 Cor. 12: 12-26). This present pastoral plan challenges us as a Board to continue to encourage this ‘symphony’ and build a harmony with ‘ONE VOICE’ in order to develop, celebrate and nurture the wholeness of the human person in our beautiful but sometimes discordant world

Month of Mary

The month of May is a special time for us to celebrate and pay homage to our Blessed Mother Mary.

A Child’s Prayer to Mary

Holy Mary, mother fair,
Filled with love for God,
Pray for us in all our needs.
Pray for us today.

Amen

Young children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Pay attention to changes in their behavior or social interactions.

Monitor the news. Images of a disaster or crisis event can become overwhelming, especially if watched repetitively. Young children in particular may not be able to distinguish between images on television and their personal reality. Older children may choose to watch the news, but be available to discuss what they see and to help put it into perspective.

Emphasize people’s resiliency. Help children understand the ability of people to come through a tragic event and go on with their lives. Focus on children’s own competencies in terms of how they coped in daily life during difficult times. In age-appropriate terms, identify other crises from which people, communities, or countries have recovered.

Highlight people’s compassion and humanity. Large-scale tragedies often generate a tremendous outpouring of caring and support from around the country and world. Focus on the help and hopeful thoughts being offered to those affected by other people.

Maintain as much continuity and normalcy as possible.

Allowing children to deal with their reactions is important but so is providing a sense of normalcy. Routine family activities, classes, after-school activities, and friends can help children feel more secure and better able to function

Spend family time. Being with family is always important in difficult or sad times. Even if your children are not significantly impacted by this tragedy, this may be a good opportunity to participate in and to appreciate family life. Doing things together reinforces children’s sense of stability and connectedness.

Mental Health Initiatives 2017-18

- Support for schools in developing a mentally healthy classroom. See Supporting Minds on the Ministry’s website and edugains.ca.
- Building partnerships with community agencies, families, and parishes.
- safeTALK suicide awareness workshops for staff available via PAL
- Psych. And SW supporting “ The Mentally Healthy Classroom” , talk to your SW / Psych about a 30- minute staff presentation at your school

May, 2018

Staying connected to your community can be extremely helpful. It may also be important to seek additional support from a mental health professional to cope with overwhelming feelings.

Communicate with your school. Children directly impacted by the disaster may be under a great deal of stress that can be very disruptive to learning. Together, parents and teachers can determine what extra support or leniency students need and work with parents to develop a plan to help student. Your school social worker, psychologist or counselor can also provide extra support. Speak to you school principal in order to access you school social work or psychology staff

Be aware of your own needs. Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief, and anger. Talking to friends, family members, priest, and mental health counselors can help. It is important to let your children know that you are sad. You will be better able to support your children if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner. Get appropriate sleep, nutrition, and exercise.

Suggested Websites:

Websites:

www.nasponline.org

- <https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/psychology/linksandresources/Documents/Trauma%20Crisis%20Intervention%20and%20Resilience.pdf>
- <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-kids-during-crisis>

A Smile A Day...

Promise me you'll always remember:
You're braver than you believe, stronger
than you seem, and smarter
than you think



TCDSB Celebrates Children's Mental Health Awareness Week May 7-11, 2018



Resources and Daily Activities at

<https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/mhs/News/mhw/Pages/Childrens-Mental-Health-Awareness-Week.aspx>

Patricia Marra-Stapleton, Psychological Associate/Mental Health Lead

patricia.marra-stapleton@tcdsb.org