

Helping Youth Cope with Tragedy through Creative Expression

During times of crises and disaster, the desire to help ease the suffering of those impacted by an event is powerfully felt by many. The recent events in the news are no exception and the children, parents, teachers and community members who are experiencing firsthand the impact of this tragedy will have a vast and long-standing need for assistance.

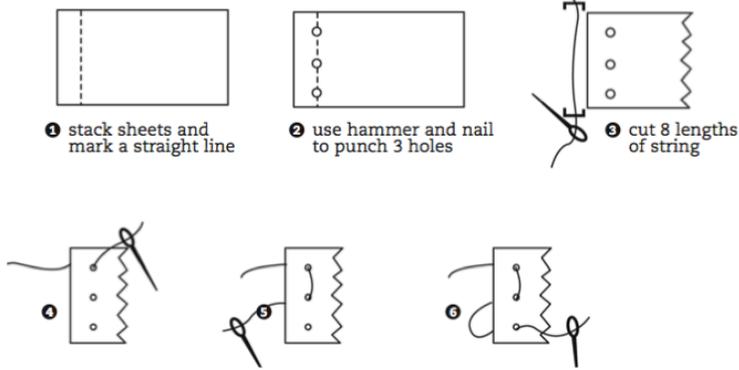
While there is no magic cure for the grief and pain felt by those affected by these incidents, there are tools that can be used to help children cope with their grief and emotions. It should be noted that for those children who witnessed the incident, knew one of the victims or watched/heard the news and now is acting fearful, withdrawn or numb, crisis counseling should be provided.

The following art activities are therapeutic tools for parents, teachers and others concerned with emotional health, to use with children. They can help facilitate the expression of emotions while providing a sense of containment and safety.

Bookmarking & Journaling

For children old enough to read and write, journaling can be a useful tool to express emotions the child may not feel comfortable verbally communicating. For younger children, drawing their emotions can be cathartic as well.

Bookmarking and Journaling: Creating a journal



Additionally, the creation of their own book for journaling can provide a sense of control as well as a source of containment for their private thoughts. Below is a simple book making idea that is easy enough for even very young children to do with some minimal assistance from an adult.

Card stock, construction paper or thick paper can be used for the cover. It is important for the cover to be durable. After putting the book together, markers, oil pastels and/or collage materials (and Elmer's glue) can be provided so the child can decorate the cover and personalize their book.

It is important to respect the child's privacy and give the child the option of sharing or not sharing the content of their journal.

Superheros

Allowing a child to create a superhero can be a fun and helpful activity that may lead to talking about issues in regards to feeling protected vs. vulnerable or unprotected and facilitating verbalization of the child's perceived dangers.

Print out or draw a simple outline. Ask the child to think about and create their own superhero who does not already exist.

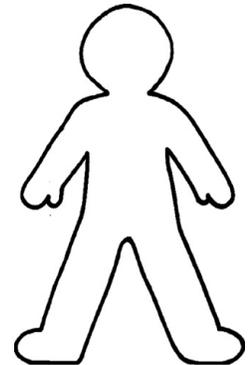
Some questions that may lead to further discussion with your child are:

- What would his/her name be?

- What is the superpower?
- Who are the villains/enemies?
- Does he/she have friends who help him/her? any friends who help him/her?

Creating a Safe Space

This activity can be done as an adjunct to the superhero activity or a stand alone. When continuing the superhero activity you can ask your child where their superhero lives and ask him/her to draw it in detail.



Superheros: Print out or draw a simple

Once the child completes the drawing ask him/her if this place is safe. If yes then discuss what makes the place safe. If no, discuss what could make it safe and come up with plans. It is also important to discuss the possible dangers your child thinks may make the place unsafe. These discussions are a good way to address the incident with your child in the metaphor and giving them the space to share as much as they are comfortable.

If you are using this as a stand alone activity then ask your child to create/draw a safe space. Discuss what a safe space would look like, what are some of the essential things for a place to be safe, who would your child like to have in the safe space with him/her.

If you are interested in receiving other **Children Trauma Tools**, please go to www.artandhealing.org and click on the "Join Our Mailing List" link. We'll be sure to email you additional materials as they are developed.

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