Inspiring Healing in the Aftermath

IBSC, London, 2011

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• Introduction
• The Event
• The Context
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• Role of instant communication
• Impact on Constituents
  – The “How?” and “Why?”
Impacted by Suicide

- Students: 40%
- Alumni: 30%
- Faculty/Staff: 15%
- Parents/Families: 10%
- Community-at-large: 5%

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- Impact on Alumni
- Impact on headmaster
- Initial impact on faculty
  - Email to faculty
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• Impact on students
• Impact on parents
  – Email to parents
Consulting Psychologist’s role at this juncture:

• Their reactions are valid
• The need to give and accept support
• Be alert for those considering suicide as a viable decision
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Secondary aftermath
• Classes and Advisor Groups
• Individual students and faculty
  • Community at large
Developmental Aspects
A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

• Confusion/Anger
Developmental Aspects
A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

- I can’t go to the memorial because I still have a cold.
  Well, really I can’t go because…

Photo: Creative Commons: Flickr dianlin
Developmental Aspects
A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

• Disbelief/Denial
• Fear
Developmental Aspects
A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

• I used to be a happy kid, then I saw everyone crying – at least I saw a lot of older guys crying...

Photo: Creative Commons: flickr kris morrell
Developmental Aspects

A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

- Withdrawal
- Sadness
- Silliness/Joking
Developmental Aspects
A. Younger Boys (ages 9-11)

Contextual variables for each boy

- Preparation for the death – none
- Experience of past losses/death
- Reactions of adults and significant others
- Cultural and religious background
Developmental Aspects

B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

• Shock and confusion
Developmental Aspects
B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

• Words cannot express the pain and loss of a suicide, especially when the guy who did it...
Developmental Aspects
B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

- Disbelief/denial
- Anger
- Sadness
- Fear
Developmental Aspects
B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

• There are no words to describe the pain and agony I still feel one week later…

Photo: Creative Commons: Flickr bfraz
Developmental Aspects

B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

• Withdrawal/need to escape
Developmental Aspects
B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

• I’m looking outside and see clouds drift away, and realizing: so do the ones we truly love...

Photo: Creative Commons: flickr stefan kloo
Developmental Aspects
B. Older Boys (ages 12-15)

Contextual variables for each boy

• Preparation for event – none
• Personal and family experiences with death
• Personal experiences with suicide
  • Reaction of peers
• Reactions of significant adults
• Personal convictions regarding morality/cultural norms
Reactions of Alumni and Parents
(in addition to those for older boys)

- Need to talk about the event
- Need to gather data
- Need to protect others: peers and other teens
Reactions of Alumni and Parents  
(in addition to those for older boys)

- I feel a need to raise a question more broad and philosophical than the email we received: how do we take the next steps?…

Photo: Creative Commons: Flickr status frustration
Reactions of Alumni and Parents
(in addition to those for older boys)

- I am at a loss of what to do. My son refused to go to sleep last night…

Photo: Creative Commons: Flickr genx-ray
Reactions of Alumni and Parents
(in addition to those for older boys)

For younger alumni:

- Need to glorify the deceased
Reactions of Alumni and Parents
(in addition to those for older boys)

Contextual variables for alumni/parents

• Personal experiences of loss
• Suicides in the family or of loved ones
• Cultural and religious norms
• Reactions of friends and peer group(s)
On-going aftermath

• Holidays and Anniversary
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• Conclusion and Discussion