



## COUNSELOR'S CORNER

The counseling staff at Scott City R-1 School District, share with you a desire for your child's success both academically and emotionally. In the following sections, we have compiled some helpful tools for students, parents, and teachers to promote healthy choices and coping skills.

### **Stress Management:**

When you feel stressed and out of control, learn to take charge and manage your symptoms. Everyone gets stressed with classes, homework, friends, family, and jobs. You have the power to minimize those symptoms and learn to focus on what is important. Settle down, know that you can lower your stress. You really ARE in control of your reactions. You CAN learn to feel relaxed using a few simple techniques.

Everyone knows the demands on students can create a great deal of stress in addition to all other issues occurring during school years. Adults often forget what it was like to be a student and so many things have changed in our world that can cause anxiety. There are definitely things we can do to minimize stress.

**\*Take care of your body:** eat healthy, get enough rest, and exercise. Things always look and feel much worse when your body is tired and not fueled properly.

**\*Your Mind/Emotions:** How do you react to stress? Do you keep it all inside? Talk to a trusted peer or adult. Figure out the things that help you relax and try to identify what your stressors are. It is important to identify the causes of stress and how your behaviors are magnifying it so that you can formulate a plan to minimize it. Listen to music, deep breathing exercises, relaxation exercises, guided imagery, write in a journal, talk to someone, prioritize, be proactive rather than reactive, and sharpen the saw.

### **Student Grief:**

In our life we all experience loss in many different ways and it is uncomfortable at the very least. It is also a very real part of life. Losses can occur with a broken relationship, friendship, divorce, and in death. All of these are very real and it gets confusing how to address the loss and our reactions to the loss.

**Grief reactions:** Understand there is no right or wrong way to react to a loss. Everyone is unique in their perceptions, reactions, and methods of coping. Grief in children can be particularly difficult and is influenced by their developmental period as well as their previous experiences. Sadness, confusion, fear, and anxiety are among the most common reactions to a loss. These are natural responses to grief

and supporting these responses is important for the healing process. There are also defined stages of grief within the process but may not occur in specific sequence.

- 1) Denial (unwilling to discuss the loss)
- 2) Anger and guilt (blaming others for the loss)
- 3) Sorrow or depression (loss of energy, appetite, or interest in activities)
- 4) Bargaining (attempts to regain control by making promises or changes in one's life)
- 5) Acceptance or admission (acceptance that loss is final, real, significant, and painful)

**Grief reaction that cause concern:**

**Pre-school level:** Decreased verbalization, Increase anxiety (clinginess, fear of separation) and regressive behaviors (bedwetting, thumb sucking)

**Elementary Level:** Difficulty concentrating or inattention, somatic complaints (headaches, stomach problems), sleep disturbances (nightmares, fear of the dark), repeated telling and acting out the event, withdrawal, increased irritability, disruptive behaviors, or aggressive behaviors, increased anxiety (clinging or whining), depression, guilt or anger.

**Middle and high school Level:** flashbacks, emotional numbing or depression, nightmares, avoidance or withdrawal, peer relationship problems, substance abuse or other high risk behaviors.

**DANGER!**

**Signs additional help is needed:**

- Severe loss of interest in daily activities
- Disruption in ability to eat or sleep
- School refusal
- Fear of being alone
- Repeated wish to join the deceased
- Severe drop in school achievement
- Suicidal references or behavior



## Supporting Grieving Children and Youth

One of the most important things is how the adults, community and family grieve a loss. Children will often gear their reactions in accordance with those around them.

- Hug your child whenever you get a chance. A hug can mean more than words, no matter the age. Hugs can also come in many forms: eye contact, high-fives, a touch on the hand, as well as a comforting bear hug.
- It is important to talk about the loss. If the adults are able to talk, the children will have permission to also
- Listen patiently to the child's feelings, grief, and perceptions
- Be prepared to discuss the loss repeatedly. Express feelings in acting, writing or art
- Give children important facts about the event that are appropriate for their age level. For example a younger child may not understand how the body stops working. However, you need to be in control of what information from the media or other sources the child may receive at home. Begin the conversation with, "what have you heard?"
- Help children understand the death and intervene to correct false perceptions about the cause of the event, ensuring that they do not blame themselves or others for the situation.
- Provide a model of healthy mourning by being open about your own feelings of sadness and grief.
- Help your child handle anger constructively. Now is a good time to discuss ways to help ourselves cope with a loss.
- Create structure and routine for children so they experience predictability and stability.
- Don't be afraid to cry. Take care of yourself so you can foster this in children
- Understand it will take a while to mourn and it is a process that occurs over months and years. It is very dependent upon the connection of the person to the child as well.
- Take advantage of school and community resources to assist in the process for those who do not seem to be coping as well. Counseling and support groups are both available through referral processes.

***Information on this site has been adapted from a myriad of resources including: National Association of School Psychologists, Death and Grief in the Family: Tips for Parents in Helping Children at Home and School III and The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families, Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program, and The Compassionate Friends Organization.***

**Counseling Resources:**

Community Counseling Center.....573-334-1100  
Crisis Line for South for Southeast Missouri (24-hour hotline).....(800) 356-5395  
Family Counseling Center.....573-651-3729  
New Vision Counseling Center.....573-334-3486  
Bootheel Counseling Center.....573-471-0800  
Associated Counseling Services.....573-335-7929  
Lutheran Family and Children’s Services.....573-334-5866

**Emergency Housing Resources:**

American Red Cross.....573-335-9471  
Homeless Outreach Center & Thrift Store.....573-332-7777  
New Beginnings House of Refuge.....573-334-5158  
Safe House for Women.....573-335-1614  
Salvation Army.....573-335-7000  
Shelter of Hope.....573-651-6005  
Revival Center.....573-204-8004

**Emergency Food Resources:**

FISH Christian Volunteers.....573-334-0207  
Scott City Ministerial Alliance.....573-264-2347  
House of Hope.....573-335-4858

**Emergency Medical Resources:**

Cape County Public Health Center.....573-335-7846  
Cross Trails Medical Center.....573-332-0808  
Southeast Missouri Hospital/Wellness Connection.....573-332-1587  
St. Francis Medical Center-Education Center.....573-331-5107

**Also visit [www.communitycaringcouncil.org/resources](http://www.communitycaringcouncil.org/resources)**

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)