

Helping Children & Youth Cope with Threats Information for Families and Educators

Threats are taken very seriously by Lakehead Public Schools and by Thunder Bay Police. When we are notified of threats to a school, student and staff safety is the primary consideration for all actions taken. All decisions to close, lockdown or institute a hold and secure are made in consultation with Police.

We recognize that incidents such as threats towards the school may cause a variety of responses in people throughout our school community. There are a wide range of positive and negative emotions and reactions that people may experience. Such reactions may include:

Common Reactions to Traumatic incidents:

- Denial, shock, numbness
- Feeling vulnerable, unsafe
- Anxiety, worry, panic
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal, isolation
- Remembering other life traumas
- Headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances
- Helplessness, hopelessness
- Sadness, crying, despair
- Irritability, anger
- Appetite changes
- Being hyper-alert

All of these reactions are normal; however for some people this may affect our behaviour, our ability to function, and our overall sense of well-being. Children and youth may have difficulty understanding and talking about their emotions. Children of all ages may require guidance and support from significant adults in their lives (parents, teachers, coaches, etc) as they work through their thoughts and emotional reactions to the event.

Ongoing or significant changes in behaviour, routine, appetite and sleep can indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. ***If you have concerns about your child, there is help available:***

- Call School Administration, Guidance Counsellor or Social Worker
- Students can attend Student Services to make an appointment to see a Guidance Counsellor or/or the Social Worker
- Refer to "Easy Access Mental Health Counselling & Crisis Services" for information on community support

Families and school personnel can help children and youth cope first and foremost by establishing a sense of safety and security. ***How adults express their emotions will influence the reactions of children and youth.*** Parents and teachers can help children and youth manage their feelings by modeling healthy coping strategies and monitoring their own emotional state and that of their children.

Coping Strategies:

- **Talk about your feelings-** talk to others about how you feel and are affected
- **Take care of yourself-** pay attention to your reactions and behaviours
- **Take Action-** find positive ways to express your feelings (journaling, mindfulness, exercise)
- **Take Time-** take time to relax and reflect. Ask for support
- **Moderate your news intake-** be mindful of social media and how this may affect you