

*Preparing for the
Anniversary of 9/11
And the Coming School Year*

*A Systems Approach to a Teachable Moment
For Middle Schools*

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Welcome to a new school year!

In This Guide You Will Find...

In this guide, you will find suggestions for working with staff on preparedness for fall, for the 9/11 anniversary, and on setting school climate that fosters trust. There are three packets, one each for elementary schools, middle schools and high schools.

All follow the same format, and each one contains:

- a note for superintendents,
- guidelines for principals
- activities for elementary teachers to use in their classrooms
- a template for a letter home to parents along with suggested activities for families to do together.

Although each set is designed for that particular level, you might find helpful ideas you'd like to adapt from the other packets. The format is the same, but the activities are very different. It might also be helpful for some to know what siblings in other levels might be doing.

On Our Web Site You Will Find...

There is a wonderful little booklet, "A Summer of Renewal," on our web site that was written for teachers in New York. It was clear that the routine of the school year provided expectations that kept many going, but that the space of having summer in their lives might allow unresolved traumatic memories to surface. Some of the later chapters have ideas about working with students at the beginning of the year. Feel free to download a copy of that booklet if there are ideas you find useful.

And...

This entire packet is also available on our web site. (If you found this via web rather than the booklets that were distributed, you already know this!)

Although we don't want to think about it, the likelihood exists that we will face some kind of future terrorist attack somewhere in the country. Although that is not the focus of this guide, we wanted you to know that there is a link to a PDF file on the home page with information that would be helpful to you should that occur.

As with all kinds of responses, we are better off if we are prepared. Although it is not necessarily part of starting your school year, it is highly recommend that you take time to print those PDF pages out and file them in the place that will be most accessible when you need them.

Perhaps most important, remember that you may be forced to respond from somewhere in the building other than at your office. Take a moment to read the suggestions ahead of time, and let that be a beginning of a greater philosophy you will create around how you will respond in the heat of the moment.

Enough said.



Introduction

After working this past year with the schools in Lower Manhattan who were most effected by the events of 9/11, it was clear that many were going into summer without having had the opportunity to really look at some of their own experiences and reactions. Because some realized that "it all might come crashing in" over the summer when they had more time to let their thoughts wander, we created a guide for teachers called "A Summer of Renewal." The weekly activities were designed to both encourage them to relax and celebrate the break, and also to take them back through examining some of their unresolved or unexamined trauma.

The next obvious project was looking at the start-up of school and the challenges it will bring for many. Like anniversaries of many major events, the anniversary of 9/11 will, for some, trigger deeper emotions to resurface. Because it comes so quickly after the beginning of the school year, we've put together a guide for school staff for that first week or two of the year. This is a guide for creating a positive climate in schools. There are some activities addressing the anniversary of 9/11 in a positive way, while taking advantage of the "teachable moment" it provides. But more critical, it sets the stage for creating trust, thus making each school a safe haven for students.

Events provide us "teachable moments." Whether we take advantage of them or not, we are still teaching students by our actions or lack of them. When we take time to talk about events and give students an opportunity to process them and give them meaning, students learn many positive things. They learn that we are interested in their well-being and that we not only engage their brains, but also their hearts...

This set is for middle school, but we encourage you to glance through the elementary and high school versions as well. There may be activities in those sections you'd like to adapt. Also take time to look over the family portion...

A Special note to Superintendents

This has actually been prepared for principals, teachers, and counselors, for use at the building level. It also has a community component that allows the school to be a resource to parents. Please feel free to download and copy any of the materials that will be helpful, putting them in the hands of your building principals, teachers, and counselors.



Introduction for Principals

This packet was created with you in mind, as the instructional leader of your site. Each year when you open your building you have new staff and students and new challenges. This packet provides resource information for your teachers and counselors and suggestions for your parents for the anniversary of 9/11 and other related activities that go on during the year, using the anniversary of 9/11 as the kick-off. Please feel free to modify any of the materials. Parent letters will need to be edited and put onto your letterhead. We ask that you leave the footers at the bottom of other pages you distribute to teachers and parents.

As principal you'll be coordinating the opening assembly. These activities could be coordinated with acknowledgement of the upcoming anniversary of 9/11, or you may wish to hold an assembly specifically on 9/11. Decisions on this will vary greatly based on your proximity to the event and whether students or staff in your buildings suffered losses on 9/11.

The purpose of these assemblies is to build community and help students and staff realize that as we look back on this past year, we have reasons for hope based on community support and how we support each other.

Moments of silence or memorial assemblies sometimes work against the positive energy that we need during this next school year. You'll see that our activities focus on developing and understanding the incident of 9/11 but also on creating and reinforcing the sense that your school is a safe haven for students.

Your opening staff meeting this year provides an opportunity for you and your staff to focus on the anniversary of 9/11 and its impact on children, your community and your staff. There may be some activities listed in the teacher's section that you'll like to do with your staff. If you decide to photocopy pages and hand them out to the staff, that would be a natural lead-in to a discussion you might have.

Doing one activity with your staff at your opening meeting would set the stage and provide a model for the teachers sensitivity and direction, assisting them as they go on to create this for their students.

Many times the best intentions of teachers can raise anxiety in children. The hope is that this packet will help focus your teachers' energy, creativity and passion around teaching and compassion, using this anniversary as an opportunity. Take ten minutes and do one of these activities at your staff meeting.



Circles of Support for Staff

Copy off the PDF file of concentric circles. Each person puts his or her own name in the center circle. On the second space out, they list as many people as they'd like who are their closest support people. Encourage them to include people from work. In the next space out are the support people who are one level further out, and so on.

After they've had just a few minutes to put names in all of the circles to represent their support system, suggest that they think about a time when something happened that either moved new people into the inner circle, or moved some from the inner circle further out.

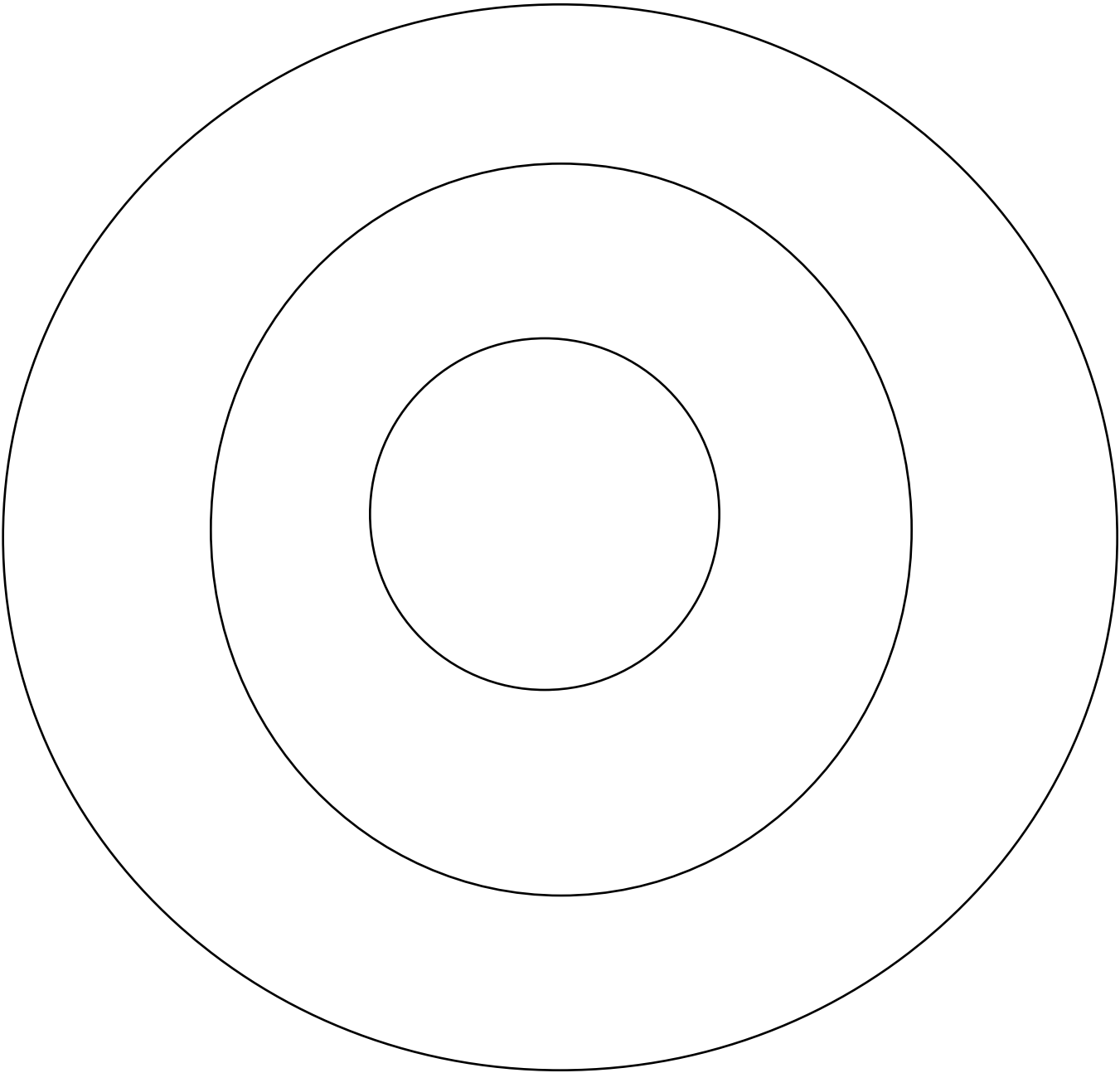
In doing this exercise with some of the teachers in Lower Manhattan who had been profoundly effected by 9/11, they saw that because of the magnitude of the event, some of their co-workers had moved into their inner most circle. Some of their family members who did not live in Manhattan and who didn't actually experience that event were now further out in their network of support.

This is an invitation for staff to acknowledge the change that 9/11 brought about if they happened to be personally impacted by that, or to see that other events in our lives change our support networks as well. It is also an opportunity as you introduce new staff to your existing faculty to help them realize that, within a year, these new faces may become part of their support network as they build team relationships and friendships.

When debriefing the exercise with the whole group, you might ask existing staff what difference it would make if they couldn't have any co-workers in their diagram. Point out that this is what it is like for new staff, and encourage them to realize the importance of reaching out to the new staff.



Circles of Support



Suggestions for Middle School Principals

You are in a unique and wonderful position to encourage your teachers to creatively use the anniversary of 9/11 as a "teachable moment" and to set the tone in your building as a "Safe Haven." In this guide you will find ideas for teachers and schools, letters you might amend to send home to parents, and things they might do to mitigate the effects of 9/11. Your counselor may provide additional ideas and insights to take you further than we've done in this guide.

There are special things you could do with your staff at staff meetings, as they will want the same support. Just as you want your teachers to nurture your students, this is your opportunity to support them as well, sharing information from this packet or other means for supporting them in addressing the 9/11 anniversary.

You might begin by having a staff meeting before students come to school. Choose a school-wide slogan or expression that sets the tone for your school to become or continue to be a Safe Haven for students. Teachers will use this as the basis for helping their students come up with a slogan that expresses their identity as a classroom community. Look for ways to teach and reach students with this concept, and make signs, flags, class shields or bulletin boards with it displayed as well.

Plan to have a school-wide assembly as soon as the year begins -- before 9/11. There are several options for this assembly:

- Consider a more positive and "active" means of having students pay tribute to victims of 9/11 than a moment of silence. You might suggest that you'll take a moment of silence in which you invite them to find gratitude for something in their lives, think of a person to whom they need to make amends, or to think about an act of kindness they might do for someone.
- Take time to recognize youth that have succeeded at something unusual. Instead of having only a focus on whom has done well academically and athletically, include youth that have done things entirely outside the school focus. This could include youth that have participated in the county fair showing animals or any number of things that are often overlooked by schools. The goal is to recognize a broader field of gifts.

Compose a letter to go home to parents telling them what you plan to do to create the trust in your school as a Safe Haven for their children. Consider having a parent gathering prior to or on 9/11. The focus doesn't have to be on the events of 9/11, but could be an entirely uplifting gathering that reaffirms a sense of community. Sample letter is attached.

Consider having an art project that somehow involves the whole school. One idea would be to get clay to make tiles, and have each child decorate a tile that will go onto a wall somewhere. You might choose only a few colors so there is a color theme going through the design. You might find a wall that could become a mural, and an artist willing to help all students participate in creating a huge mural with a theme. Or you could help students create a mosaic.

You might consider having all students and staff in the school participate in a "Hands Are Not For Hurting" project. In this project, all students see an assembly in the morning that creates a sense of urgency about having a safe school. Then in their classrooms later in the day, all students take a pledge that basically says, "I will not use my hand or words for hurting myself or others." All students trace their hands on purple paper, cut out the hand, sign it and it makes a terrific huge poster for the room to arrange them on black butcher paper and laminate it. It serves as a reminder or focal point often when issues of violence/harassment come up during the year. This project can become much bigger. In Salem, Oregon, our governor held a press conference when he and his wife signed a parent's pledge that they wouldn't use their words or hands for hurting their child, which is a project they now do with newborn children born in their local hospital. You could encourage parents to take the pledge and ask others at their place of employ to join in as a statement to children in your community their support for this. This is a nearly limitless activity, and one that is wonderful to do every year.

Following this is a template for a letter to parents, then guidelines for counselors, and for teachers for activities in the classroom.



(Your school letterhead here)

*This is offered assuming you will have to amend it depending on your activities and decisions.
To be used, taking off copyright information at the bottom, sent as your own.
Remainder of the package needs footer left in tact.*

(Date)

Dear Parent:

As we celebrate the beginning of the new school year, we also face the anniversary of the events of September 11th last year. We wanted to share with you the thoughts and plans we have for making that time meaningful, yet uplifting for our students.

We recognize that students were impacted by the events of 9/11 in varying degrees. We also can expect that, as the day approaches, we will begin to have a great deal of news coverage of the event, including film footage of the downing of the towers and other troubling scenes.

Mental health professionals who work with children and youth caution us about how deeply bothered they can become from watching events that were terrorizing for victims. We encourage you to carefully monitor your children's viewing of coverage, and perhaps consider alternatives for helping them give meaning to 9/11. If you do choose to have your kids watch coverage, carefully choose one special, watch it together as a family, and then take time to talk about it with your kids afterward.

Included with this letter is a list of suggestions for families. It includes activities you might do as a family and discussion starters for how you might talk with your adolescents and help them come to terms with what has happened. Often if kids don't bring up the subject, we want to think that they're doing fine. But they are apt to wait for us to bring it up. They sometimes assume our silence on a subject is a message that it is not open for discussion.

At (name of) School, we have planned for the anniversary on both a classroom and a school-wide basis. Teachers have been encouraged to spend some time each day on activities that are specifically chosen to help our students get to know each other quickly, to begin to gain trust, and to have a sense of identity amongst their peers. We'll also be using social studies classes to help students gain insights and find a positive focus.

Each year we have an assembly for the opening of the school year. In addition to our usual agenda, student government will plan recognition of past student contributions to the school, perhaps some poetry or other positive expressions. We will take time for recognition of service learning projects from last year and celebrate the coming year together, welcoming in our new class of sixth graders. Our goal with this gathering will be to reinforce their sense of community, and to see the school as a "safe haven."

We hope you'll let us know of your concerns, your needs, or how we might support you and your adolescents during this school year. (Counselor's name) is our counselor and s/he'd be happy to work with you if your son or daughter is particularly effected by the events of 9/11. We look forward to building a great working relationship with you as our year together unfolds.

Warm regards,

_____, Principal



Suggestions for Families For the Upcoming Anniversary of September 11th

Once you turn off the television, you'll have lots more time for meaningful interaction. First let's look at some discussion starters. Here's a concept that is often very helpful. If we ask kids, "Are you worried?" they often deny it, even though they are. But if we **state** that kids are often worried, and ask them what kinds of worries other kids have, it does two things. It states an obvious fact. Some adolescents worry. And it is not confronting them -- they aren't saying whether **they** have fears, just that **some** kids have fears. So here are some discussion starters.

When talking with adolescents, for it to be helpful for them, we really need to do much more listening than talking. Resist the temptation to have instant answers that you hope will take away their pain or fear. Instead, begin with a stating something simple and obvious. "The anniversary of September 11th is coming up. I'm thinking that kids will be thinking about it more right now. What have you thought about it?" ... and then... just listen! Again, **resist** the temptation to have instant answers. You can avoid judging their responses with a reply such as, "I can see why you might be concerned about that." Don't dismiss their comments as being unfounded or silly. First relate some level of understanding why that might be their perspective. That doesn't validate that their fears are well founded, just that you can understand why kids their age might worry about that. Then work together on what might make them feel better or safer.

Allow a little time for silence. Really listen to their responses, and just sit until another "statement of observation" comes up for you. The next one might be, "Last year, some kids had fears or bad dreams. What kinds of things do you think kids your age might have had?" Notice that we aren't confronting them by making them "own" their fears. We're simply acknowledging that they probably know what kids their age would be worried about. Of course, what they're likely to tell you about their own fears, because that is their frame of reference.

As they voice their fears, you might simply ask, "What could we do that would help you with that?" rather than always coming up with the answers. Sometimes what kids come up with will help them more than our ideas because it really addresses exactly their own fears. It is also helpful for kids to hear from you that you have fears as well, and to let them know things you do to cope.

Some other great questions include:

- "What do you wish adults understood about how this is for you?"
- "What are some of the things you've learned this past year?"
- "Where do you go in the house when you want to feel safe?"
- "Where do you go in your head when you want to feel safe?"
- "Who do you go to at school when you want to feel safe?"
- "Who are the people you know you can talk to about just almost anything?"

Be sure that a major part of your time in discussion has a very uplifting and positive focus. Revisit some of the fun things you did as a family over the year. Look through a picture album together. Better yet -- take this time for the family to go through pictures from the past year and put together a picture album of this past year. Make a date for another time together within the next few days. Consider having a regular time together and every other time, have the major focus on the positives. Ask questions like, "What has gone well today (or this week)?" "At those times, you might just make one mention of your last discussion by saying that you found this one thing that s/he said that was meaningful and perhaps mentioning that you've been thinking about that. You might make a real effort to begin each time together by having family members share something for which they are grateful in general, and then something they are appreciating that someone else in the family has done for them in the past few days.

As you see the benefit of having these special times together, it might be a nice addition to start a family journal that everyone writes or draws in as you wrap up your discussion time. Even a couple of sentences each time from each person would give you all lots to look back on over time.



Activities for Families

These activities are not age specific, and all can be adapted to a more mature or younger child as needed. When writing is indicated, try drawing for younger kids. Actually, it is often much more revealing to have older kids draw than they might think! We can hide lots in choosing our words carefully, but there is sometimes much revealed in our art. **Begin each time together with a check-in.** An example of that might be for each person to tell one thing that troubles him or her and one that gives him or her hope.

Family Lifeline: This can be an individual or a group activity. Use long paper if you have it, or tape together smaller pieces so the line can be a few feet long -- at least three, and better if more. The lifeline can begin many places -- with Mom and Dad's marriage, or for each individual, with birth. Then significant events are written or symbolized in art along the line where they would fit if the line were divided evenly chronologically. If doing a single line for the whole family, be sure all have the chance to come up with significant events and record them. As you do this, 9/11 may or may not come up. As the parent, you may decide to bring it up and put it on the line, or you may choose for this to be an experience that only displays what the kids come up with. If you do want to open discussion about how they're doing with 9/11, that would be an easy way to do so. But whatever you choose is fine. Sometimes we do a lifeline that goes on a few years and we put on our dreams and goals. Sometimes people put the positives in one color and the negatives in another. Or they may put the positives above the line and the challenges below. Sometimes the symbols people draw for events are much more powerful than simply writing the word. Be as creative as you like about this.

Circles of support: Each person gets a piece of paper that has perhaps four circles, one inside the next, all evenly spaced from a small one-inch circle in the center to one that is within an inch of the edges of the paper. In the very center circle, each person writes his/her own name. Then in the space between the next lines, write the name of the people you most depend on when times are tough. Who can you talk to? Who can you always depend on? And the next ring out are people who are supportive, but not quite so close, and so on with each ring out. When everyone is done adding names, take turns talking about why some people are closer in than others. A follow-up to this might be to have each person look at their names and determine which of them have moved in or out in the past year, and what might have prompted that change.

A Map of My Journey: This activity has lots of possibilities. It can be the "Map of My Journey Through Grief" or "...Through challenges" or "... Through life" or anything else you come up with. But this is an opportunity for youth to see the coping skills they've gained while facing adversity. The first part of the activity is for each person to simply draw their map or journey through grief or loss or transition or whatever. Then after everyone is done with the maps, each person can share with others what their journey was, and at each of the challenge points, there is the opportunity to name or write in what was learned in that situation. Relative to 9/11, some may put that event as a life challenge and some may not, but this will also be an opportunity for family members to each talk about why they did or didn't.

An article out of the newspaper or a news magazine: Parents might choose an article or let each of the kids choose one they found interesting and have them share their thoughts on that article with the rest of the family. If everyone chooses an article to share, people all take time to look at different perspectives and different events around the world. Kids in middle school are old enough to be able to talk about the similarities for people who live in the Middle East trouble spots and what happened for us on 9/11.

The Gratitude Book: A book is only one way, but find some way of having each person in the family record something for which they are grateful each day. Or it could be a gratitude collage if you can hang a large piece of paper on the wall that can stay up for some time. The goal is to have people be in touch every day with an attitude of gratitude.

Something We Can Do: This is a time to begin to look outward. Whatever our life circumstance, it is likely we can look at someone whose life has challenges we'd rather not face. As a family, make a commitment to go together to do something for someone or a group or organization that could use help. Use this as a time to build a sense of character, as a time to touch in with community, as a time to reaffirm that "We all live in the shelter of one another."



Suggestions for Middle School Counselors

You are in a terrific position to influence the school staff in using the anniversary of 9/11 as a "teachable moment." Additionally, you are more likely than most to have insights regarding the special needs of high risk students and those whose lives might be jarred by these kinds of events or those who sustain losses.

Look over the suggestions for principals. There may be ways you can support the principal in organizing the time set aside at a staff meeting for acknowledging changes in their lives since 9/11.

Some of the possible goals you might have over the first week with your principal could be to:

- Provide an activity for a few moments of focus for staff on how their own network of support shifts from time to time, and may have been effected by the events of 9/11 or other events in their lives. (Use the one we've provided or supply one you like better.)
- Support your principal in creating an understanding among staff in how they might use the "teachable moment" provided by the anniversary of 9/11 to create an environment of tolerance and understanding.

Ways you might support staff might include:

- Taking advantage of this opportunity to sensitize staff to the needs of students and give handouts on recognizing depression.
- Helping staff amend activities in this guide, or help them create their own which will raise awareness in students and provide opportunity to learn new coping skills.
- Helping teachers provide moments in their classrooms to normalize students' reactions to traumatic events, whether national or personal in nature.

And with parents:

- Read the suggested letter to go home to parents. Take this time to add to the letter any suggestions you might have or add an additional sheet to be sent home.
- Consider whether it would be helpful to add the handouts provided in this guide or others you may have to the back of the letter home to parents.

In other ways:

- Look for links to web sites or tips you might add to your school's web site.

Take a few moments to look through your own journals, magazines and publications for articles that might be helpful for school staff or parents. Consider taking a few tips from several of them to put into the student newspaper. See whether your local paper would do a short column on tips for parents based on information you provide for them.

You already know the students who are most likely to be impacted by this anniversary or future events. Take a moment to think about how you might reach out to them as soon as school starts to reinforce your relationship with them.

And on September 11th:

It would seem appropriate that on the actual anniversary, the guidance office have a more active role, perhaps having some food or snacks out for people to stop by and talk informally. Create a bit of an invitation to drop by. Some people may be surprised at how much the anniversary brings up, and many could be most comfortable talking informally with you.

At the end of this guide, two PDFs have been included which you might find helpful. You can print them out and copy them as long as you leave the copyright information at the bottom of all pages. One is on signs of depression and the other is a series of questions you can ask students which may help you discover whether they are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (You could check our web site at <www.cmionline.org> for manuals and workbooks that contain information on trauma and dealing with students in the aftermath of catastrophic events.)



Suggestions for Middle School Teachers

Depending on how close you are to New York or Washington DC, or whether you have students or staff who had loved ones on one of the airplanes, you are likely to have students in your classes who have varying levels of fear, sadness, emptiness or very little reaction at all to the events of 9/11 and the upcoming anniversary.

As school begins this year, the anniversary arrives quickly, so take the time to create unity among students early on. Think ahead of time about what you might do so students in your class have a sense of belonging. Here are a few ideas.

Unfinished sentences/mapping outcomes:

You might break them into small groups of three or four, and give them **unfinished sentences**, having the groups come up with the rest of the sentence as well as writing a paragraph on each one. (Feel free to download the PDF file of unfinished sentences we're providing or create your own.) **As a follow-up** to this exercise, have each group map their own responses on a piece of flip chart paper. Then, have a huge piece of butcher paper ready on the wall, and invite groups to map their work collaboratively.

Collage:

Have students in small groups each make a group collage on a theme. Examples might be:

- The spirit of working together
- The spirit of community
- People helping people
- Signs of hope for the future.

Poetry, Haiku:

Involve students in writing poetry, haiku, or letters on how they connect with others:

- Topics for poetry or writing in journals
 - People who have made me feel welcome
 - We all live in the shelter of one another
 - Times a group has helped me feel connected
- Bring in senior citizens, or incorporate a larger community in some other ways

The continuum of kindness to hate: In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, students kept asking, "Who are the terrorists?" This concept came out of that time. Hang up a long piece of butcher paper, and draw a long line on it. On one end, represent the best of human kindness. You could write "unconditional love" or "Mother Theresa/Mahatma Gandhi" and at the other end, "extreme hate" or "Hitler/Melosovik" or "atrocities of war" -- whatever feels comfortable to represent the two extremes.

In the center you might put "indifference" or simply mark a center point. Take a moment to talk about indifference. That may be a student who is self-absorbed or self centered, one from a home with so many problems they don't have the "left over" energy to care about others...

To begin getting actions recorded on the paper, you could provide a list of acts of kindness and hate, or you might let them come up with their own. We've provided a list you could use if you like. Whether by our list, your list or their own, invite students to find consensus on where a long the continuum each act might fit. It will be most meaningful for them when they begin adding their own ideas.

Be sure that they generate as many acts of kindness as those of violence -- that there is balance on the continuum. Then ask, "Over which of these do we have control?" Now you can facilitate having them mark those over which they have control. They have control over how they treat each other, but they don't have control over how their parents act. With examples like bombing of the embassy, students might first think they have no control over that, but you might point out to them that they can become better informed about other cultures and specifically about the terrorist groups involved in similar activities. This is a time when the teacher can begin to help students understand global view by Third World countries of the US. The goal is for the teacher to raise this awareness: An act of terrorism may be the only way a third world person can find to communicate with us the liberties we've taken by stripping natural resources from their lands with little or no improvement in their standard of living... why



militant groups in third world countries feel there is only one way to get their message across to the industrialized nations... the role of technology in a country's development... overpopulation... education... religious beliefs... difference in a ideological war or a religious war.... Manifest destiny....

Give students some of the above-mentioned topics and create a debate.

- What is the responsibility of the US and other industrialized countries to developing nations, especially those from which we take resources?
 - Energy issues
 - Peacekeeping
 - Banking issues
 - Financial aid
 - Environmental issues
 - Technologies that support sustainability
 - Technologies that support farming
 - Overpopulation
 - Immigration -- should we have immigration quotas?

In a Middle School integrated team approach where several disciplines work together, the topics listed above could easily be adapted for integrated projects, with social studies, English (writing), science, math, cultures and world languages all collaborating. Involve your art and music teachers in any of these activities in ways that will be much more creative. They might also take your theme further in their classes as well.

Student Leadership

Sponsor an assembly that provides recognition to students who have achieved in many ways, especially ways that aren't usually noticed in schools. This could include competitions they have done in activities outside school, such as 4-H.

Sponsor a poster contest with a theme that takes off from this work.

Each homeroom creates a flag that represents the diversity in their class, going well beyond ethnic and cultural differences. Also include students' interests, hobbies, accomplishments, and so on. Or do coat of arms that represents a small group or their classroom.

Encourage clubs and co-curricular groups to become involved:

- Each group recognizes at least one student for some special contribution
- Poster contests
- Civic or community service



Unfinished Sentences

Last year on 9/11, lots of kids were worried about _____

Now that a whole year has passed, we realize _____

Some of our parents thought _____

Other parents felt _____

If something like that happened again, _____

We have realized that _____

I hope our school will _____



Possible List of Actions for the Continuum of Kindness to Hate

- Bombing of Pearl Harbor
- Someone drinks and gets behind the wheel of a car and causes a traffic death.
- One student who uses drugs encourages another to start using.
- Parents slow down to let a car in from an entrance ramp.
- A student drops a book and the kid behind him picks it up for him.
- A group of kids use duct tape and strap a kid to the flagpole outside the school.
- A gang shootout leaves one boy dead and two others injured.
- A student writes a letter to a teacher who has made a difference for them.
- A suicide bomber walks into a crowded mall in Tel Aviv and blows himself up, killing five others.
- Student teases another because of the clothes s/he is wearing.
- A terrorist group bombs the US embassy in Tanzania.
- Students invite a loner to sit at their table for lunch.
- Parents at a Little League game begin yelling at the coach or at kids who miss a play.
- Parents yell at other drivers on the freeway.



Hands Are Not For Hurting

This is a wonderful project to integrate into your school start-up every year. No matter what programs you already have in place on violence prevention, nothing in this will be at odds with your current programs. There are some special things this adds in terms of school climate.

There are several steps and endless possibilities to how this can be done. In general, the process is this:

1. Students have some kind of assembly or presentation that sensitizes them to the plight of others, the destructive force of violence or some related theme.
2. Later in their classrooms, students hear about a pledge they can take to promise not to use their hands or words for hurting themselves or others.
3. They trace around their own hand (or someone helps them) and they cut it out, sign it, and sign their pledge.
4. All hands, including the teacher's, the principal's and other staff people who participate, are glued to a black background; the poster is laminated and hung in each classroom or in the hallway just outside the door of the classroom.
5. Pledges can be sent home with a note to parents so they will all talk together about the meaning of the pledge and how it becomes a foundation for classroom environment.

Variations and additions to the theme:

1. Ask your mayor to declare a town or city wide "Hands Are Not For Hurting" day.
 - S/he and his/her staff will take the pledge, cut out their hands and create a poster like the school's to be hung at city hall.
 - Service clubs, civic organizations and others encourage businesses and agencies to do this same activity with their staff as a sign of support to the school's concept.
 - Get billboards in town to donate a few months (especially right at the beginning of the school year) to have the "Hands" logo and slogan posted. Find an organization to have a city bus painted with the symbol and slogan.
2. Invite your hospital to become involved:
 - As parents come in for a birth, they walk past the postings of parents from the past few months.
 - After their child is born, the mother and father (if present) they trace around their hands on a placemat-sized pledge card that has room for the two adult hands and a tiny hand down between them.
3. Extend the concept to churches, synagogues and temples, Boys and Girls Clubs, day care and after school programs and other places students gather. Some may take the pledge with several different groups, which is great.
4. Have a poster contest to develop a special hand symbol that will be used by your community, or a poster that incorporates the hand in the Hands Are Not For Hurting Project and has some blank space below the symbol with room for writing a message. Ask local businesses to put the poster in their window with an offer for families who have taken the pledge at home, such as 15% off pizza for whole families together on Tuesday nights, or books on peace and social skills for kids or parenting skills 15% off. If their merchandise doesn't lend itself to this kind of deal, ask them to have a drawing or raffle -- like a travel agent that would let families sign up and one is drawn for a free weekend stay somewhere.
5. Have students work on a special design that could be screened onto t-shirts to be given away at assemblies to students who have done something noteworthy at school or elsewhere toward the interests of peace making, conflict resolution or related good works.
6. Ask students to come up with ideas on how they could incorporate the hand and the pledge concept in ways we haven't come up with yet.

Visit the web site at www.handsproject.org for more ideas and information on this activity.



Identifying Depression in Students

Depression is more common among students than most school staff realize. Because adolescence brings with it mood swings and "carbonated hormones", we sometimes don't stop to recognize that a student has been "down" over some period of time.

There are a variety of ways students try to manage on their own. We often don't realize that some are using drugs and alcohol in order to medicate against the pain. Some depressed students may join a peer group that reinforces their depressed state.

There is a correlation between suicide and depression, although not all suicidal youth are depressed and not all who are depressed will become suicidal. Still, keep a watchful eye and when you're concerned about a student, take time to engage them in conversation. Let them know of your concerns. See if they'll tell you what's going on.

Here are some things to watch for:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Sleeping all of the time
- Withdrawal from friends
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Appetite loss or gain
- Dropping off of academic performance
- Getting into trouble -- rebellion to get attention

Depression is a metabolic dysfunction in the brain, so discipline isn't going to change that imbalance. Medication is effective and safe, but it is essential that the physician prescribing medication for depression be specialized in managing this challenging condition.

Sometimes we tend to minimize their statements and when students tell us they're depressed, we may respond with something like, "Oh, we all get the blues." We need to ask questions to find out how long they've felt that way, and how much these feelings permeate their days. If it lasts for more than two weeks, seek help. Signs include:

- Depressed mood for most of the day
- Measurable loss in enjoyment of usual
- Inability to stay awake or fall asleep
- Restlessness and slowed body movement
- Fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt most days
- Inability to think clearly
- Continued thoughts of suicide or suicide attempt

These are some of the signs of depression, and it is the responsibility of clinicians or physicians to make the diagnosis. Our job is to recognize and refer these students. It can change their lives!



THE TRAUMA CHECKLIST

Answer the following questions relative to whether this seems to have changed since the tragedy or crisis that recently occurred.

- _____ Are you have trouble concentrating on school work since the event?
- _____ Do nightmares of the event wake you up at night? Dreams you can't remember but that wake you up with a sense of alarm?
- _____ Do pictures come to mind when you're thinking about something else, interrupting your thoughts and your life?
- _____ Are you feeling hyper vigilant? (Like you're always waiting for something else bad to happen, so you have to really stay alert.)
- _____ Do sirens or other noises, smells, or sights trigger you into vivid memories of the event, maybe making you the feel the "rush" of uncomfortable physical sensations you had at the time of the crisis?
- _____ Has your appetite changed significantly?
- _____ Are you very tired, sleeping lots more or wanting to?
- _____ Has your energy level changed significantly?
- _____ Do you still sometimes feel the same kind of joy in life you had before?
- _____ Is there anyone else whom you might think might be having trouble with any of these things? If so, whom?
- _____ Are there other things that seem different for you since the event? If so, what?
- _____ Is there anyone you are talking about or working with on this?

