

Bringing Hope and Healing after Trauma



Telling
God's
Story

Introductions

- Crista Smidt, guidance counselor
- Lisa Mouw, director of learning
- Josh Bowar, head of school



Learning Targets

- I can identify ways to provide hope and healing after a trauma.
- I can respond like a justice seeker after traumatic events.



Beginning Thoughts

- Our experience
 - Teacher/student sexual abuse
- Every school is unique
- Every circumstance is unique
- God's Story

Guiding Principles

- Focus on hope
- Transparency, communicate early and often
- Let others help
- Say and do hard things with love
- Lean in
- Do not waste tragedy
 - tragedy = opportunity
- Rely on God



Student Support

INITIAL FEELINGS

SHOCK and DISBELIEF

apprehension wondering
Uncertain disappointment
anger

Questions Students Had

- Is he going to jail?
- Who is going to be our teacher?
- Who is going to take over the coaching?
- What about the teacher's things in the classroom?
- What about his family?
- Why would he do that?

Procedure We Followed



Immediately the day after termination, a written announcement and devotional on disappointments was given to the 5 – 8 teachers to read in their homeroom. We felt it was important that every student hear the same information at the same time. Possible student processing activities regarding disappointments/loss were given to the teachers. Several outside agency counselors were in the building to help assist small groups process their thoughts and feelings.

We were informed by CAASA to just deal with processing feelings, as the sharing of specific information too many times could be detrimental to their case.

Response as a justice seeker...

Thinking, Positive Relationships, Manage Emotions, Build on Strengths

- Restructuring of our middle school culture by implementing Grace Groups.
 - because of some fallout behavior in our JH, a no touching policy was initiated
- We have reframed our 5 - 8 developmental unit.
- K – four students were educated more about good touch/bad touch.
- Individual and small group counseling continued.
- Alumni high school students were given an opportunity to meet together.
- For student/teacher safety, teachers are encouraged to keep their doors ajar if they are working one-on-one.
- Before and after school activities - 2 adults need to be present.
- Public library purchased many of the books that were recommended by our local agencies for family and student access.

Elbow Partner Reflections



What connections are you making to this part of our story?

What wonderings do you have?

Parent Support



5-8 Support- Parent/Student Conversation Night- Aaron and Niki Baart

- Parent Night- Abuse Awareness/Responding to Abuse Situations-
 - *local and school counselors
- Parent/Student Nights- Adolescent Development Units- Baarts
- Resource list- counselor information, books, handouts
- *SCCS Website Link <http://www.elbowcenterchristian.com/parents/abuseinfo.cfm>

Parent Support



TK-4 Parent Support-

*Educating students and parents is the most effective way to guard against abuse and to encourage students to speak up if they experienced abuse.

- TK-4 Parent Night- Abuse Awareness and Education
- *Just Ask Josh- continuing the conversation
- *Friday Updates- safety and policy updates/reminders
- *Counseling sessions/financial assistance

Community Support

Service of Lament/Prayer Walk
Church Connections/Support
1,000 Man Stand



Faculty/Staff Support

- Initial period of people upset, take the arrows
- Frequent, open communication
- Group debriefs, group counseling
- Prayer
- Food, stress relievers
- Time
- Be visible
- Lessen the load
- Instill structure and security
- Demonstrate vulnerability, emotions
- Emphasize over and over: "This is OK to talk about. You need to wrestle with this. We are in this together."



Educator Sexual Misconduct Training

- Audience = school faculty and staff
- Available to do for other schools and would be happy to

Perpetrator Support

- Intentional decision = this is the role of the church and the perpetrator's family

Helpful Organizations

- CAASA
- ATLAS
- Seasons
- All Things New
- Bethesda Christian Counseling
- Creative Living Center

Working with the Media



- One spokesperson for the school, emphasize this with stakeholders
- No media allowed on school grounds unless invited
- Give people a line to say if they are contacted
 - "Mr. Bowar is our best source of information on this topic. Please connect with him."
- Refer to your public statement when they call
- Spokesperson 3 Cs = calm, competent, consistent
- Tell your story, or the media will tell it for you
 - Do not say "no comment", say, "This case is too important for me to jeopardize it by sharing"
 - *Survivors* instead of *victims*, say what you are doing to respond and help
- Connect with local media first, partner with them
- The media is tricky, they will say anything for a story or to get the "scoop", be firm, repeat lines, do not believe what they say

More Cs:

- Confidence – know what we're doing
 - Character – we're giving the truth
 - Compassion – we care about the kids
- Cooperative – media is looking for cover up
 - Include how you are bigger than the event
 - Future tense verbs and pronouns
 - What you're doing to embrace those who have been impacted



Working with Lawyers/Law Enforcement

- We called our lawyer right away to get advice
- Partner with lawyer throughout the process (asking when you can say what and what you shouldn't say)
- Partner with law enforcement right away
 - Information
 - Sweeping the building
 - Assisting with perpetrator getting his things after termination
 - Helping you navigate the justice system



Elbow Partner Reflections



What connections are you making to this part of our story?

What wonderings do you have?

Helping Yourself

- Minimize media and social media exposure
- Accept feelings – be patient with recovery/don't force healing process/feel without guilt
- Challenge the sense of helplessness – take positive action/participate in public rituals (pray together, worship together, talk together)
- Get moving/exercise
- Reach out to others
- Makes stress reduction a priority

Our Next Steps

- Strengthened policies
- Open communication
- Continual support through the healing process - for as long as it takes
- State and federal trials
- Respond to needs
- Try to follow God's lead



Back to Back, Face to Face

1. What did you know about trauma before you heard our story?
2. What did you learn about trauma from our story?
3. How do traumatic events in God's story provide opportunities to bring hope and healing?

We Hope You Can Learn
from Our Experience in
God's Story

Blessings to You!
