



TEACHING AFTER A TRAGEDY

After a campus tragedy, students and staff may experience a variety of emotions. Common response may include anger, sadness, numbness, or shock. These responses may impact academic performance and classroom dynamics. Faculty are often described as most helpful by students when an event has been acknowledged in the classroom. Below are teaching suggestions for faculty to determine a course of action after a campus, local, national, or international tragedy.

Check-in with yourself

Identify how you are feeling, what you need, and the options you may have for personal support and guidance. Take care of your daily needs such as sleep, food, water, etc. It can also be helpful to set boundaries for the consumption of news and social media following the event. You might also want to connect with your department leaders, colleagues, and/or the campus EAP program for support.

Create space & set boundaries

Students may be suffering following a tragedy; acknowledge a tragedy occurred and validate any experience by sharing common responses to crisis. Set boundaries for addressing the tragedy in the classroom by stating how much time you will talk about or guide an activity related to the topic. Setting time-limits creates predictability in the classroom and can reduce the likelihood students will feel overwhelmed by a challenging topic.

Ideas for action

- **Take a moment of silence**
- **Create** a journal or writing exercise for silent reflection about the event
- **Accommodate** for academic concerns (ex. lenient due dates, a review session for an upcoming exam, decrease the introduction of new topics immediately after the event)
- **Facilitate** a structured discussion about the event by setting time-limits, establishing “ground rules” with the class to create a safe discussion, and allow students to opt-in or out of the discussion

Offer resources

After any tragedy or crisis, it is very important to highlight resources available for support. Whether or not you choose to acknowledge the event, community and campus resources should be shared. If you offer yourself as a resource, inform students if you are a confidential resource or if you need to share their information with another department. Visit the CTC website for a complete listing of campus, local, and nationwide resources available.