

Social Media After a Suicide Loss: Tips for School Administrators *(Information provided by Riverside Trauma Center and Samaritans)*

Losing someone to suicide is a terribly painful event. Young people may experience a lot of emotions all at once. There is no one way of grieving the loss of a loved one. Grief is a process of healing that takes different courses for different people. Grief may never be entirely finished, but it can become more and more manageable in students' lives. Try not to set time limits on their grief, or compare their feelings to anyone else's. Many young people use social media in a way to stay connected to the person who has died and to others who share this loss. Here are some tips to guide you if students in your school are using social networking as a way to express their feelings and to remember their friend:

1. To the extent you can, monitor the site. Teens in despair and crisis might post messages that could warrant concern.
2. Be prepared to support students as necessary using your postvention strategic plan. See http://www.sprc.org/library_resources/items/after-suicide-toolkit-schools and http://riversidetraumacenter.org/documents/RiversideTraumaCenterPostventionGuidelines6_24_11.pdf
3. Remind your students that as with all social media, other people can see what they post.
4. Check in with the students regularly. Ask how they are feeling and do not be afraid to bring up the loss. From day to day, reactions may change. It is important they know you are there and available to listen and validate what they are experiencing and feeling.
5. Be aware of how much time students are spending on media sites. Make sure they are not isolating themselves and that they continue to be involved with activities and friends.
6. Using a social networking site can be a very healthy way to grieve, but let the student community know that there are multiple ways to express feelings. Encourage your students to talk with other people and to let others know how they are doing.
7. Schools often find it is helpful to conduct suicide prevention workshops several months after the death. Samaritans and Riverside Trauma Center both offer these types of programs. If you are interested in learning more, please call the Samaritans Education and Community Outreach Program at **617-536-2460** or call Riverside Trauma Center at **888-851-2451** and **ask to speak to a Trauma Center Manager**.
8. Riverside Trauma Center and Samaritans can provide postvention services for your school community.
9. You may need support yourself. If you do, find someone who you can talk to and who can give you support. You can always call the Samaritan 24-Hour Helpline at 1-877-870-HOPE (4673) with any questions, concerns, or if you just need someone to listen.