



MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL: A LIST OF "DO'S" AND "DON'TS"

Memorial activities can be a valuable way for schools to help students and staff deal with trauma and loss. How a school approaches a memorial can make the difference in the healing nature of the process. Following are a few Do's and Don'ts to avoid further traumatizing students and promote a positive experience. For more information on memorials and helping children cope, go to www.nasponline.org

<i>Do</i>	<i>DON'T</i>
<i>Do</i> prepare for the needs of youth both preceding and following memorial activities in the community or school.	<i>Don't</i> underestimate the resurfacing of intense common grief reactions, including sadness and anger.
<i>Do</i> keep parents and staff informed of all upcoming activities related to the memorial plan, and allow any student, with parental permission, to attend a memorial activity.	<i>Don't</i> require all students or staff to attend a memorial activity.
<i>Do</i> provide staff and parents with information regarding possible related behaviors and emotions that students may display.	<i>Don't</i> pathologize normal grief reactions. Conversely, do not minimize serious, atypical grief reactions that may require closer clinical investigation.
<i>Do</i> focus on the needs and goals related to the students, and include parents and community members in activities as appropriate.	<i>Don't</i> try to accomplish all things in the school context; there are multiple forums to which the school staff, administration, and faculty may contribute that do not occur at school.
<i>Do</i> be sensitive to developmental and cultural differences when developing memorials.	<i>Don't</i> assume that "one size fits all" when it comes to developing a memorial.
<i>Do</i> develop living memorials (e.g., tolerance programs) that address the problems that lead to the crisis event.	<i>Don't</i> allow the memorial to be a forum for expressions of hatred and anger toward the perpetrators of crises.
<i>Do</i> something to prevent other crises from happening. Try to move students from the role of "victims" to the role of "doers."	<i>Don't</i> focus the memorial on the uncontrollable aspects of the crisis.
<i>Do</i> emphasize signs of recovery and hope in any memorial activity.	<i>Don't</i> allow a memorial to simply recount tales of the traumatic stressor.
<i>Do</i> allow students to discuss, in small group settings, such as classrooms, how they feel about their memorial experiences.	<i>Don't</i> schedule a memorial at such a time that it will not allow students to discuss or process their experiences.
<i>Do</i> encourage communication (e.g., writing letters and exchange of ideas) related to memorial activities.	<i>Don't</i> force students to participate or share feelings and ideas.
<i>Do</i> provide a referral system (school and community based) to identify youth who display complicated grief reactions and ensure appropriate support services are available.	<i>Don't</i> expect that staff and faculty will be able to independently identify individuals in need of mental health assistance.
<i>Do</i> establish an infrastructure (plans and processes) to provide assistance and support to students in immediate need.	<i>Don't</i> anticipate that students will independently seek out the appropriate professional assistance.