Helping Children Understand the Seriousness of Making School Threats

All too often, we hear in the media of yet another school locked down due to a student who has threatened violence. Sadly I don’t see this ending anytime soon, so it is important for both educators and families to talk frankly with their students about the ramifications that can occur from making any kind of violent threat against others.

We can no longer simply scold a child who makes a threatening statement and move on; those days are long gone. Because of the number of school shootings nationwide, every single threat—no matter how innocuous it might seem—has to been taken as truth and dealt with swiftly. One of school staff’s top priorities is ensuring the safety of every student and staff member on their campuses. Therefore, schools have no choice but to address each threat, no matter how idle it may seem. Equally as important, though, is educating them about the impact their words can have.

Sadly, many times students are just joking around and don't realize the short- and long-term effects that more than likely will occur because of their action. Experts say having so many avenues for posting these threats is an easy temptation for vulnerable youth. One way to address this concern is in the context of a healthy online presence; what to post, what not to post and the ramifications of such. Some helpful websites regarding digital citizenship can be found below:

- Google's Be Internet Awesome: Family digital safety resources
- Common Sense Media: Privacy & internet safety (for parents)
- NetSmartz: Teaching digital citizenship

For younger children, the best way to address this may be to help the child express what they're feeling. Children may be saying these things because they want the adults in their life to take their concerns seriously, and they think raising the stakes by saying something scary will get someone's attention. All they may want is to feel like their feelings are important, so acknowledging their feelings and saying you know they must be frustrated or hurt can give them a lot of the validation they're looking for.

Threatening harm to others or to themselves is a very big deal with very big consequences. Equipping our children with the appropriate language, strategies, and coping skills to address the underlying need will be crucial in addressing these concerns. As parents/guardians, we are called to be gatekeepers of these things. Please find additional resources throughout this newsletter to help in the process.

4 Tips to Help Manage Stress

1. **Take care of your body**: This can seem like a daunting task but unless we focus on one thing at a time. Ex: Drink 3+ Cups of Water Daily
2. **Take breaks** from engaging with News sources. Replace it with something like quiet time, prayer, gratitude utterance.
3. **Talk to others** about your stressors. Releasing that pent up energy can be critical.
4. **Set time limits** around how long you vent or stress about a certain thing. Ex: 10 minutes to worry about 'worst case scenarios'

**1.**
**2.**
**3.**
**4.**

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Social Emotional Wellness
Winter Edition | 2022

The Crisis Intervention & Prevention Team addresses mental health concerns to create a safe & supportive school environment for all students. You can submit a referral to our team by clicking **HERE**

**Dr. Carmen Brown, LSSP, LP | Team Lead**
817-399-2562

**Heather Andrews, LCSW | 817-399-2570**

**Irene Cedillo, LCSW | Spanish Speaking**
817-399-3558

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Focus on Objectives

In a District News Archive from February 2020, Arlington ISD shared about the increase in unfounded school threats. Unfortunately, two years later we continue to see this trend. Per article:

“Arlington Police Chief Will Johnson stressed that the penalties for threats are real and severe. Of the 22 arrests in 2019 there were two felony charges and 20 misdemeanor charges. Those charges carry time from 180 days to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to $10,000. FBI special agent in charge of the Dallas field office Matt DeSarno said federal charges can be considered with five years in federal prison a possibility.”

Cyber Safety and Digital Responsibility: A Parent’s Guide

Anonymous Reporting

The Skill of Reflective Listening

What is REFLECTIVE LISTENING? Reflective listening is a way of providing a caring, nurturing environment for our children. If we want a child to be a caring human being who respects others, we need to respond to them in respectful, caring ways. Through reflective listening our children know we value their dignity. They “feel felt,” giving them a sense of well being that results in stress reduction.

Why is Reflective Listening important?

- Show that feelings matter
- Show that it is possible to talk about uncomfortable or complicated feelings
- Show that we care about the child’s feelings
- Teach the child that all feelings are acceptable, even though certain behavior is not
- Defuse an uncomfortable situation
- Reduce a child’s urge to act out because the child feels heard
- Teach the child a vocabulary for articulating how they feel
- Reduce whining, anger and frustration

How do I use the skill of Reflective Listening?

- Listen quietly and attentively
- Verbally acknowledge the child’s feelings with a word
- Give the child his wishes in a fantasy
- Set aside your own feelings temporarily
- Refrain from interrupting, arguing, reasoning or justifying
- Give the feeling a name

Examples of Reflective Listening:

- Acknowledge the child’s feelings
  - “You sound happy.”
  - “You sound tired.”
- Use sounds such as “Mmm,” or “Oh” when the child is describing a situation to demonstrate your attention and non-judgmental response
- Use a word to describe the feeling
  - “Perhaps you feel disappointed”
- Accept the child’s feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior
  - “You are still angry about losing your book and you are kicking your desk. I can’t allow that. You can tell me about what is most upsetting about losing your book.”

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Dan Siegel: The Adolescent Brain

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**COUNSELING RESOURCES**

*This list is not extensive but a good starting point.*

- **ACH Family Services** *(FREE)*
- **Lena Pope** *(Low Cost)*
- **Recovery Resource Council**
- **Balance Beacon**
- **Trauma Support Services**
- **Starfish Counseling**
- **The Parenting Center**
- **Youth Advocate Program** *(Medicaid Only)*
- **Crisis Team Website**

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**EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**

*If your child is suicidal an evaluation to assess level of risk can be done at the following locations:*

- **Perimeter Behavioral Hospital** *(Ages 5-17)*
  
  7000 US Hwy 287  
  Arlington Tx 76001  
  (817) 662-6342

- **Cook Children’s Behavioral Health** *(Ages 3-17)*
  
  801 7th Ave  
  Fort Worth  
  (682) 885-3917

- **Mesa Springs Hospital** *(Ages 12 and Up thru Adult)*
  
  5560 Mesa Springs Drive, Forth Worth  
  817-952-5571  
  Ft Worth Office: 817-841-8002  
  Northwest Office: 682-593-6001

- **Texas Health Behavioral Health Center Arlington** *(Ages 13 Up, Thru Adult)*
  
  800 W Randol Mill Rd  
  Arlington, TX 76012  
  682-549-7916

- **JPS - Trinity Springs** *(Ages 13-17 & 18 Up)*
  
  1500 S. Main Street  
  Fort Worth, TX 76104  
  (817) 702-3636

- **Children’s Medical Center Dallas** *(Ages 3-17)*
  
  1935 Medical District Dr  
  Dallas, TX 75235  
  (214)456-8899 - Inpatient  
  (214)456-5900 - Outpatient

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**RESOURCES**

- **Counseling - Outpatient**
  
  Typically, once a week to monthly, 50-75 minute sessions with a mental health professional to address mental health concerns. Ex: Talk therapy, play therapy, CBT, etc.

- **Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP)**
  
  Treatment service that is used to address mental health diagnoses that typically entails individual therapy, family therapy, group therapy several times a week over a period of several weeks.

- **Partial Hospitalization (PHP)**
  
  Type of program used to treat mental health diagnoses. The patient continues to reside at home, but commutes to a treatment center up to seven days a week.

- **Inpatient Hospitalization**
  
  This setting involves an overnight or longer stay in a psychiatric hospital or psychiatric unit of a general hospital. The facility can be privately owned or public (government-operated).