



TA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, UC SANTA BARBARA

Responding to a Campus Tragedy: Instructional Strategies for Instructors and TAs

The “General Response Strategies” are based on the attached reference list. Not all of the associated teaching strategies will be successful for every instructor. Take up what feels comfortable for you.

- **TAs:** check in with the instructor about your plans for your sections and labs.
- **Instructors:** check in with your TAs re expectations, and signal any changes to the syllabus, content and assessment.
- **All:** Remind your students about CAPS: <http://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/> (805 893 4411)
- CAPS clinicians can be called on to come to your class; contact Turi Honegger <turi.honegger@sa.ucsb.edu> in CAPS
- If a student appears to need counseling support, do not ask outright or draw attention to them in class.
- Where possible, be discreet. Check in with them afterwards perhaps; walk with them over to CAPS if need be.

GENERAL RESPONSE STRATEGIES	TEACHING IMPLICATIONS & STRATEGIES
1. Give and Receive Support During disaster recovery, be willing to give and receive support from others. Talk about what you are feeling and be a good listener when others need to talk more. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept anger and silence• Be patient with the range of responses that will arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find the words to acknowledge the tragedy, recognizing where you are at in the grief process. While you could prepare some words you will connect more around these issues if you speak slowly, gently and authentically from the heart.• Speak as “we” – not “me” & “you”, “us” & “them”.• Expressing caring sentiments: “Take care of yourself, eat well, exercise, get plenty of sleep”.• If you can, and within limits, make yourself more available to your students (online, office hours, extra review sessions).
2. Get Back to Familiar Routines As much as possible, resume everyday routines. The familiarity of routine can be comforting and restore a sense of normalcy to an abnormal situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If it feels comfortable, return to regular classroom routines, behaviors, and organizational patterns.• Have your plan for the session on the board or on your slides, but remember to take some time at the beginning of the first class back to acknowledge what happened.• Check in at the start of some sessions, eg.: “How are we doing?” Speak of your own thoughts and feelings, as appropriate. As time passes, you may feel less need to check in.

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<p>3. Take Time to Grieve</p> <p>During a disaster, loss takes many forms. It could be a death, the loss of your personal belongings or a way of life. Allowing yourself to grieve will help you recover from the loss much quicker than burying those feelings. If you need to cry, that's okay. It's your body's way of relieving those painful feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First session: if it feels comfortable for you, you may want to offer a few moments or even 30-60 seconds silence. • It's wiser to steer discussions away from longer, deeper (emotional) explorations of motives, revenge and social and political action. • Tears may appear at any time in the classroom; tears are fine. • Maybe carry a small packet of tissues (discreetly hidden). • Recommend really distressed students to CAPS; others may just want a few minutes out of class in nature to collect themselves.
<p>4. Set Small, Achievable Goals</p> <p>During the process of disaster recovery, it is easy to become overwhelmed by all the devastation around you. Set yourself small, achievable goals each day to avoid becoming immobilized by these feelings.</p>	<p>Research shows that some students may be vague, mentally distracted, and have trouble with short-term recall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with shorter video extracts, shorter reading passages. • Keep discussion questions short and to the point. • Allow time for (and suggest if need be?) the rereading of a passage being discussed. • For a complicated activity, ask students to repeat (to a neighbor or buddy) the steps in an experiment, or the steps in your instructions. Review those steps with the whole class too, if appropriate.
<p>5. Eat Well and Get Some Exercise</p> <p>This may not be possible during the early stages of disaster recovery, but making the effort to take care of yourself will help you keep your physical strength up which in turn helps you stay emotionally strong.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat well: eat your greens - you know what that means! • Take a break and take a walk along the beach, around the lagoon, around campus. • Remind your students of self-care too.
<p>6. Get Enough Sleep</p> <p>When you are under stress, sleep is more important than ever. Practice good sleep hygiene to the extent possible. Sleep and mood are closely related.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look after yourself - remember the "oxygen mask" analogy! • Remind your students of this too. • Recommend some times frames or time limits for certain assignments and projects, ("Don't spend more than X hours on this").
<p>7. Get Back in Touch With Simple Comforts</p> <p>What simple comforts do you enjoy? Admiring the beauty of a sunny day, hugging a cherished pet or reading a good book are examples of simple pleasures that can be comforting in times of stress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage mindfulness and moment-to-moment awareness of the content of what you are teaching and learning. • Stop and notice something beautiful/unusual/colorful in an experiment. • Stop and notice beautiful language, words or images; a pattern in a chart. • Stop and Notice!
<p>8. Find Something Positive You Can Do</p> <p>Doing something positive to aid in disaster recovery efforts, such as volunteering your time or donating money can help alleviate the feelings of powerless that often follow a disaster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A class project? In one tragic case, the students in one college class put together a memory book for the family of a student who drowned. • Is there something your class can do for the campus and community, esp. if relevant to your course? (This may not be wise if exams are approaching). • Give your students information, leads, strategies for supporting others.

References:

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