

Friday, September 9, 2005

Dear Parents:

Today your children have entered Tyler schools. First, let us say that we cannot begin to imagine what you and your children are going through. Our thoughts and prayers go out to you. We, as an entire school district, want you to know that we welcome your children and will be doing our best to assess and meet their needs.

One of our major concerns is their emotional needs. We have been working hard to prepare for this part of their adjustment.

Tyler ISD is fortunate in that a number of its counselors and school psychologists hold two separate certifications: Trauma and Loss School Specialist and Trauma and Loss School Consultant through the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children, a program of the Children's Home of Detroit, MI. Tyler has been approaching trauma that children face using models based on our training. We have found it to be very effective and helpful with children during previous disasters.

Some of your children may have had mixed emotions about entering our schools. On the one hand there may have been much excitement; on the other hand there may have been anxieties, fear, concerns, etc. This is normal under regular circumstances so this is not so surprising. However, rest assured that we are monitoring your children to help their adjustment be as smooth as possible.

Some of the things that your children or maybe even you have experienced as the result of this disaster may be frightening to them/you because they are so different from things that have been experienced before. It is not unusual when one experiences a trauma to have difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, to want more sleep than usual, to want to be around family and friends more, to be hyper vigilant (constantly watching and monitoring to see that everyone and everything is okay), to have loss of appetite, to want to eat more than usual, to be startled by certain sounds that take you back to the disaster, and many more.

The above mentioned reactions are perfectly normal for someone who has experienced what you have. In fact, for the first four to six weeks after a disaster, many people go through a period of "acute stress" in which they experience a lot of these. It is no fun to experience these reactions, but they do tend to get just a little bit better as time passes.

One of the things our counselors will be trying to do is help your children process what they have been through in a safe, loving environment. We do not do psychological interventions – they are conducted by Licensed Professional Counselors. We use psycho-educational models that use psychomotor activities that help the children. While we work with them, we will be able to identify any that may need the services of a professional counselor. If this is the case, you will be notified.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your child's school and they will be happy to assist you. We hope that your experience with Tyler Independent School District will be a positive one.

Sincerely.

Marie K. Nelson, M.Ed.

Guidance Counselor and Coordinator of Trauma/Emergency Response for Tyler ISD

<http://www.tlcinstitute.org>

This information is made available courtesy of The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC), a non-profit 501(c)3 program of Children's Home of Detroit (CHD). If you have questions that you would like to ask our TLC Certified Trauma Specialist on staff, or would like a recommendation for a TLC Certified Trauma Specialist in your area, please call TLC toll-free at 877-306-5256 or email us at steele@tlcinst.org □