



CRISIS INTERVENTION FOLLOWING A PHYSICAL ATTACK BETWEEN STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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KNIFE ATTACK IN SCHOOL, JANUARY 2023

- Middle school in the coastal Slovenian city
- One student injured with a knife
- One teacher involved directly
- Attacker was in 7th grade and was hospitalised and put into psychiatric ward after the attack
- The cause was attacker failing the class and losing his „only“ ally, his class teacher
- Difficult home environment, emotionally malnourished, divorced parents, kids left to themselves
- Attacker obsessed with video games and media reports, not dividing well a real world from imagination

SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND CONSEQUENCES

- Threats with shooting, knife attacks, violent physical attacks, etc are more and more common even in Slovenia
- Cases:
 - Knife attack in January 2023
 - Shooting threat in April 2024
 - Physical attack by the underage member of gypsy community in June 2024

Government, CSD, Police, Ministry and/or schools DO NOT have a structured and organized plan to firstly prevent or minimize violent attacks and later on to act correctly and appropriately in case of attack, to ensure psychological welfare of children

SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND CONSEQUENCES

- Most common consequences are:
 - Affects to biological stress system and developing brains
 - Negative effects to local community
 - Higher antidepressant consumption in school area surrounding the attack location
 - Anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, fear

Due to report we received from the school and social workers, we prepared the intervention program based on theoretical facts, our consultation with teaching fellow and the knowledge of our intervention leader and participating fellow. We focused on and prepared to see fear, mistrust, judgement, anxiety and maybe anger, yet, as noted below, the real situation surprised us a bit in a „positive“ way.

DAY 1 - INTRODUCTION

- What are their thoughts (in general and in correlation to the attack)?
- How did they see the the attack through their eyes?
- What information do they have? Are they well informed?
- If they had any scary thoughts, any fears?
- Is their perception of school any different?
- If they needed/need any support?
- If so, where did they found it and IF they found it?

We exposed few possible ways of founding support and consolation and tried to present the negative and positive influence of mentioned few such as outrages, suppression of our feelings, hugs, conversation, closeness, etc. We continued the discussion into facts that there is no such thing as overload of love, hugs and human closeness, that this are not only kids needs but basic human needs (Casriel, 1974) and that events like this only give us a chance for our progress and to connect even more.

DAY 1 - EXERCISES

- The train – from station of discomfort, through many obstacles, jumps, re-routing, dragging and slowing down, to the final station of comfort and joy
- Circle of feelings – Holding hands in a circle, moving to the center while expressing a specific feeling under the leadership of exercise leader
- Exercise of safe space – comfortable position, eyes closed, silence, thinking about feeling parts of their body, being relaxed, imagining a safe space, its colors, smell, noise, feelings,...
- Finished with a feedback

GOALS:

Expressing and connecting with emotions

Relaxation

Gaining their trust

Feeling safe, protected, calm,...

DAY 2 - SHORT MORNING INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW DAY, MUSIC AND FEEDBACK ON HOW THEY FELT AFTER OUR EXERCISES

- During music we tried to picture all the emotions (fear, sadness, anger, love, joy) to picture person, place, scene that made us feel certain emotion, how does it feel and letting it out of our body except for the love and joy.
- Planned exercises was back to back – but we noticed, that students tend to lost their focus, motivation and drive during slower and quieter exercises as it is in one way expected considering the fact that we worked with groups of 30 (pre)teenagers that are big enough distraction already between themselves. Therefore we implied more active and loud activities such as repetition dancing circle - We noticed that student relaxed a lot during noted exercise, moved the body, laughed, moved the hips and were in general more open and prepared to cooperate afterwards
- Dinamic meditation, shaking board, trust fall, ending with a short role play

GOALS:

- To help them get in touch with their body, emotions, feelings, specially anger and pleasure
- Relaxation of basic emotions and body, activation of body (specially shoulder – anger and hips - pleasure)

DAY 3 – START OF THE DAY & A SHORT FEEDBACK ON HOW THEY ARE FEELING

- Repeating dancing circle to wake them up and to wake the emotions
- GROUP WORK, how are they feeling, what are/were their thoughts, emotions,...:
 - Teacher involved
 - Attacker
 - Victim
 - Sister of the attacker
 - Parents
 - Other teachers

Mixed feelings

Fear

Missunderstanding

Confusion

Sadness

Concern

Anxiety

SUMMARY

- Majority of students liked the exercises we carried out, we noticed some pretend (or real) boredomness and less eager will to cooperate, especially with the oldest group but again – we have to keep in mind that we worked with mostly teenagers in a group and school environment where there is definitely a lot of shame and social anxiety present. It was interesting to see the difference of mentioned as the youngest group was the most eager to do the exercises, they cooperated best and were actually listening and cooperating most of the time which shows us that the shame and anxiety comes with age or better – with teenage years.
- Dinamic meditation - noticed that 30min of dynamic meditation was to long for the age group as they got bored after few minutes of each exercise. It would be more affective if adjusted to shorter sequences.
- Short excercises in general worked best, high tempo
- We ephasized to them that the school stays their safe space even if the attack happened, that teachers are the ones that they can turn to for any kind of help or/and advice, that they are their allys and that they can trust, that the school is doing everything in their power, to minimalize events like this to happen ever again.

CONCLUSION

- Overall satisfactory condition of the students
- Fear was present but in minor quantities
- Most effective exercises involving body movements
- Students showed a lot of understanding and empathy towards the attacker
- Importance of school being a safe, trustworthy space
- Importance of having an ally in school – friend, teacher, social worker,...
- **HIGH IMPORTANCE** of having a plan prepared to react ASAP in violent attack cases