

Counselor's Corner

10 Year Anniversary of 9/11

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Dear Parent:

As we celebrate the beginning of the new school year, we also face the 10 year anniversary of September 11th, 2001. No event in recent history for the United States so shocked our citizenry or changed some parts of our lives. Our sense of security was shaken. We recognize that adults and children were impacted by the events of 9/11 in varying degrees. As the day approaches, we will begin to have a great deal of news coverage of the event, including film footage of the downing of the towers and other troubling scenes. Events provide us "teachable moments." Whether we take advantage of them or not, we are still teaching by our actions or lack of them. When we take time to talk about events and give children an opportunity to process them and give them meaning, children learn many positive things. They learn that we are interested in their well-being and that we not only engage their brains, but also their hearts. 9/11 was not only a time of sadness but a time to honor the multitude of heroes that arose. We could look at some of the positive lessons learned through surviving this event.

Mental health professionals who work with children and youth caution us about how deeply bothered children can become from watching events that were terrorizing for victims. We encourage you to carefully monitor your children's viewing of coverage, and perhaps consider alternatives for helping them give meaning to 9/11.

We look forward to being part of your child's educational team in supporting their social and academic needs during the school year.

Activities for Families

These activities are not age specific, and all can be adapted to a more mature or younger child as needed. When writing is indicated, try drawing for younger kids. Actually, it is often much more revealing to have older kids draw than they might think! We can hide lots in choosing our words carefully, but there is sometimes much revealed in our art. **Begin each time together with a check-in.** An example of that might be for each person to tell one thing that troubles him or her and one that gives him or her hope.

Circles of support: Each person gets a piece of paper that has perhaps four circles, one inside the next, all evenly spaced from a small one-inch circle in the center to one that is within an inch of the edges of the paper. In the very center circle, each person writes his/her own name. Then in the space between the next lines, write the name of the people you most depend on when times are tough. Who can you talk to? Who can you always depend on? And the next ring out are people who are supportive, but not quite so close, and so on with each ring out. When everyone is done adding names, take turns talking about why some people are closer in than others.

The Gratitude Book: A book is only one way, but find some way of having each person in the family record something for which they are grateful each day. Or it could be a gratitude collage if you can hang a large piece of paper on the wall that can stay up for some time. The goal is to have people be in touch every day with an attitude of gratitude.

Help your child write a thank you note to your own local fire fighters or police. You could take this opportunity to help your youngster realize that there are lots of people who help keep us safe, or help us out when we especially need it. You might choose other kinds of community support people instead of fire or police, but the connection to be made here is how people help take care of each other.

Something We Can Do: This is a time to begin to look outward. Whatever our life circumstance, it is likely we can look at someone whose life has challenges we'd rather not face. As a family, make a commitment to go together to do something for someone or a group or organization that could use help. Use this as a time to build a sense of character, as a time to touch in with community, as a time to reaffirm that "We all live in the shelter of one another."