EDITORIAL

Now that the taboo over discussing death with children is slowly lifting, the educational system is more willing to accept that unsupervised encounters of young children with distorted images of death may adversely affect their cognitive, emotional and social development.

This new attitude among teachers has emerged since the recent implementation in the Israeli school system of the holistic programme of death education known as PACS SOS. This working model deals with the individual's *P*hysical, *A*ffective, *C*ognitive and *S*piritual perceptions and processing of the concept of death and the experience of loss, within the *SO*cial *S*upport systems of family and peers. The programme's group activities help the participants accept death as a natural phenomenon, validate a wide range of grief responses and encourage emotional expression – both verbal and non-verbal – in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere. PACS SOS also offers cognitive training in dealing with loss and supports a spiritual search for the meaning of life and death. After the programme, sensitised teachers and school counsellors can offer primary prevention in developing coping skills, crisis intervention during a disaster, and post-traumatic healing.

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FURTHER READING
Ayalon O, Flasher A. Chain Reaction. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1993.

Responding to children in trauma: A systems approach for schools



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Schools are under enough pressure today without expecting teachers to become psychologists and trauma counsellors as well. However, for students to succeed academically and socially, schools need to provide an environment in which psychological well-being can be nurtured and the potential for damage minimised. At no time is this more important than when a school community is affected by a traumatic event – large or small.

A VITAL ROLE FOR TEACHERS

'The special needs of children following disasters have often been underestimated or unrecognised . . . more attention to this in teachers' training has been suggested as likely to be very beneficial,' reported the *Disasters* Working Party[1]. This article argues that schools and teachers, applying their normal roles and educational skills, are a vital part of this total psycho-social response to tragic events. It urges a move from a crisis reactive response to prepared, pro-active interventions[2], in which individual pupils and staff are viewed

EDITOR'S NOTE

When the working party that produced *Disasters – Planning for a Caring Response*[1] sought to involve community institutions up and down the country in commenting on early drafts, it had a very poor response from educational departments. It is therefore with particular pleasure that we concentrate in this issue on schools and how they cope or can be helped to cope with disaster and bereavement affecting pupils and staff. In this article, Capewell reports on her survey of schools in many parts of the world. She found common themes that, with a few notable exceptions, involved avoidance and much head-burying. She makes some valuable suggestions for the development of coping strategies in schools.