

**Student Prayer Service
In Honor of Sharmelia Jeffries
December 3, 2003**

Opening Prayer

In this moment of sorrow, the Lord is in our midst and comforts us with these words: Blessed are the sorrowful; they shall be consoled.

Let us remember . . . that we are in the holy presence of God.

Tender and loving God, we know that you are with us.
Take our hands and stretch them toward that which brings us hurt.
Lead us into our sufferings and help us to be healed.
Together let us touch our woundedness.
Together let us meet our pain.

Teach us how to enter our suffering in a way that brings us great wisdom and growth.

Gift us with determination not to turn away.

Help us to meet each other with kindness and mercy.

Tender and loving God, together let us walk the road to our healing.

God's Word

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

We want you to be quite certain, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him.

Sharmelia's Word

I had the pleasure and honor of working with Sharmelia since May to make the dream of the Kairos retreat at Christian Brothers a reality. She was one of the two rectors, or student directors, of the retreat. I would like to share with you some of the thoughts that she expressed in a talk entitled "The Fourth Day" that she gave on the last day of the retreat.

"How much better things can be once we embrace God's love for who we really are. As it says in First Timothy, chapter four, verse twelve, "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity." God is the only reason I am standing here today, and he is giving me the strength to read this speech.

You have probably all heard of the phrase “tough love.” Tough love is a time when we have to challenge our friends to be the best people they can be. There might be a time in the months ahead when our friends will try to hurt themselves or someone else. . . .we may have to confront our friends with tough love so that they do not continue to suffer or cause suffering in the lives of others. You and I need to be there for each other if one of us needs help. I pray that all of you have the strength to Live the Fourth because it will take you farther than you ever thought possible.”

The Lord’s Prayer

Let us call on God to help us through this time of loss and sorrow. Please join hands with the person next to you as we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Our Father . . .

Song – “Give Yourself to Love”

Sharmelia once stated that when she returned from the Kairos retreat she attended in June with students from St. Ignatius High School, she often sang corny love songs around her house. This song was probably one of them. It was a song we heard several times during that retreat, and we all came home singing and humming it. Sharmelia followed the advice of the songwriter – she gave herself to love.

(Play the song)

Throughout the day today rolls of paper and marker pens will be available here in the gym. You may drop by and write a message to Sharmelia or express what is in your heart. The posters will be displayed later in the school.

Closing Prayer

Loving and merciful God, we entrust our sister Sharmelia to your mercy. You loved her greatly in this life; now that she is freed from all its cares, give her happiness and peace forever. Bless her family members and friends as they mourn her loss. The old order has passed away; welcome her now into paradise where there will be no more sorrow, no more weeping or pain, but only peace and joy with Jesus, your Son, and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

St. John Baptist de La Salle . . . pray for us.
Live Jesus in our hearts . . . forever.

Wednesday, December 3, 2003

Order of the Day

8:00 Students Report to D Set
Students will be called to the gym; leave
belongings in D Set

8:15 Prayer Service
Students will be dismissed and return to D Set

9:00 D Set: Community Grief Exercise

10:30 Break

10:50 - 11:15: A Set

11:25 - 12:50: Early E Set

11:15 - 11:45: Early Lunch

11:55 - 1:20: Late E Set

12:50 - 1:20: Late Lunch

1:30 - 2:55: F Set

Sharmelia Jeffries

Rest in peace.

Live, Jesus, in our hearts.

Community Grief Exercise

All students should remain in the group for this exercise. If you wish to take your group outside or to an alternate spot on campus that is not in use, you may do so.

Sharmelia Jeffries (12), deceased; Ebony Jeffries (10), sister; Mrs. Theldorine Pettway, mother

Time: End of Prayer Service until 10:30 a.m.

Script

Teacher: We are going to participate in an exercise. There are no right or wrong answers. All of your reactions are normal in the face of an abnormal event such as what our community has experienced. Everyone in the school is doing this exercise right now as a sign of our strength and support for one another.

RULES:

- What we share in this group is respected as confidential and stays in this room. The only exception is the legal boundary that if someone shares something that would be harmful to themselves or others I as the adult must report it.
- We should not interrupt anyone else nor comment on what anyone shares in a negative way.
- We must respect all group members and only speak in turn one at a time as we enter into the fact stage.

FACT STAGE: There are five facts listed. We may not have time to get through them all. You should feel free to share with the group your answer to the fact. Everyone should answer Fact #1, because every one of us has an answer for that question. You may pass and choose not to share on the other facts. *(Teachers: this gives you an opportunity to scan your audience and know what you are dealing with this morning.)*

FACT #1: Where were you when you heard the news? How did you hear?

FACT #2: What were your first thoughts when you heard the news? (Intellectual)

FACT #3: What were your feelings when you heard the news?
(Heart)

FACT #4: What are you experiencing now as you think about our loss?

FACT #5: Pass out the Critical Incident Stress handout. Discuss normal responses and then share what helps each individual to deal with our loss.

HOW MIGHT STUDENT GRIEF MANIFEST ITSELF IN THE CLASSROOM?

REGRESSION	REVERSION TO CHILDLIKE BEHAVIORS: E.G. THUMB-SUCKING, CLINGING, SEPARATION ANXIETY, NAIL BITING,
RESISTANCE	UNUSUAL ABSENCE/TARDINESS, FAILURE TO COMPLETE TASKS, UNCOMMUNICATIVE, GENERAL WITHDRAWAL
REBELLION	ANGER, IRRITABILITY, ACTING OUT
DENIAL	"I'M FINE...IT'S NO BIG DEAL"
DISTRACTION	CONFUSION, FORGETFULNESS, ATTENTION SPAN MAY BE SHORTER
DEPRESSION	SADNESS AND CRYING, GENERAL LACK OF INTEREST
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	- STOMACH ACHES, CHANGES IN EATING HABITS, SLEEP DISTURBANCES (INSOMNIA, NIGHTMARES)

INITIAL INTERVENTIONS

1. RESPOND IMMEDIATELY

IT'S EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THOSE IN GRIEF TO REACH OUT. ANY OVERT INDICATION DEMANDS REAL ATTENTION. DROP EVERYTHING. EVEN FOR A MOMENT, GIVE YOUR TOTAL ATTENTION.

2. FULLY LISTEN

TWO THIRDS OF ALL COMMUNICATION IS NON-VERBAL - YOUR WAY OF LISTENING IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE FACT THAT YOU ARE LISTENING.

- A) **BE ATTENTIVE** - THIS IS NOT A TIME TO FINISH UP YOUR ROLL BOOK OR GRADE A PAPER.
- B) **BE NON-JUDGMENTAL** - MAKE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR THE BEREAVED TO SAY WHAT THEY WANT TO SAY. ACCEPT THEIR WAYS OF TALKING ABOUT THEIR LOSS.
- C) **CRYING SHOULD NOT BE INHIBITED** - IF YOU SEND A CRYING STUDENT OUT OF THE ROOM, TO THE BATHROOM OR A COUNSELOR, THE MESSAGE THAT YOU'RE TRANSMITTING IS THAT CRYING IS INAPPROPRIATE, THAT IT SHOULD BE CONTROLLED OR DONE IN PRIVATE. IF THE STUDENT INITIATES THE REQUEST TO BE EXCUSED, THAT'S O.K.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVENTIONS

- * CONSIDER WRITING A LETTER OF CONDOLENCE OR SYMPATHY NOTE.
- * OBSERVE STUDENT W/ INCREASED ATTENTION OVER NEXT WEEKS.
- * BE FLEXIBLE - QUALITY OF WORK/BEHAVIOR MAY DETERIORATE FOR A TIME
- * MAKE REPEATED CONTACT -DON'T SAY, "IF YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME AGAIN, LET ME KNOW." THAT PUTS THE BURDEN ON THE GRIEVING STUDENT. INSTEAD, ASK SPECIFIC QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE A FULL ANSWER RATHER THAN "FINE" OR "YES/NO."
- * REMIND STUDENTS TO TAKE GOOD PHYSICAL CARE OF THEMSELVES
- * SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN PEER ACTIVITIES IF STUDENT EXPRESSES INTEREST OR AMBIVALENCE
- * CONSIDER REFERRAL FOR ADDITIONAL HELP (COUNSELOR, GROUP, ETC.)

CAUTIONS NEVER MENTION A LOSS TO ANOTHER STUDENT OR A CLASS WITHOUT THE BEREAVED STUDENT'S (OR PARENTAL) PERMISSION.

SHOWING **EXCESSIVE** SYMPATHY MAY REINFORCE FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS.

DON'T MAKE FALSE PROMISES (E.G. "COME BY AFTER SCHOOL AND WE'LL TALK" - THEN FAIL TO BE THERE).

AVOID PUSHING THE BEREAVED TOWARD RECOVERY OR DEMANDING THAT THEY STAY WITH THEIR GRIEF ACCORDING YOUR NOTIONS

DON'T MINIMIZE THE BEREAVED'S FEELINGS. DON'T TELL THEM HOW TO FEEL OR THAT THEY SHOULD (OR SHOULDN'T) HAVE CERTAIN FEELINGS.

REMEMBER: IN THE FIRST STAGES OF GRIEF IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THAT GRIEF IS A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE. RECEPTIVITY TO THIS CONCEPT TYPICALLY COMES MUCH LATER.

- * WITH ALL THESE INTERVENTIONS, YOU NEED TO BRING SELF-AWARENESS:
- * RECOGNIZE HOW YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH LOSS MAY INFLUENCE YOUR CAPACITY TO BE EMOTIONALLY AVAILABLE TO THE BEREAVED.
- * TRY TO SEPARATE YOUR OWN NEEDS/FEELINGS FROM THE NEEDS/FEELINGS OF THE STUDENT.