



## Answering Student Questions

A simple acronym that can help direct difficult conversations is VETS - Validate, encourage truth, support coping. Remember that **modeling is one of our most powerful teaching tools**, modeling how you struggle and deal with difficult emotions in situations like these is informative for students.

- **Validate** - validate the emotions that you are hearing whether that's sadness or fear, let the student be heard, you could use phrases like: "I am so sad to hear this as well," "It can be scary when we hear about things like this."
- **Encourage truth** - an essential part of crisis response is to help contain misinformation, there may be rumors or speculation when a death happens and people often want to fill in unclear details with their own story. It's important to kindly correct misinformation as it comes up by sticking to the facts that you *do* know. Also, it's always okay to say something like "we don't know what happened or why it happened" as it's often true.
- **Support Coping** - Help students come up with ways that they can cope with difficult emotions in-class and remind them of additional help available. Some examples: Writing cards for family members or friends, taking a quick walk, journaling, mindfulness or deep breathing, or taking some time to talk with a counselor at the school.

Altogether, an example of this would be "This is so sad and I was also shocked when I heard about this death as well. We don't know what happened or exactly why. What do you think you could do today if you are struggling with this news? (then discuss healthy coping strategies, including the availability of counselors...if necessary walk with the student to available help)"