



10

PILLARS OF RECOVERY AND RENEWAL



FOUNDATIONS OF RECOVERY



ELEMENTS OF RENEWAL

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School crisis readiness is essential. Response is critical. And: what happens after matters, too.

SCRR Overview

The School Crisis Recovery & Renewal (SCRR) project is a new initiative that launched June 2020. Funded by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA), the School Crisis Recovery & Renewal (SCRR) is a [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) (NCTSN) Treatment and Services Adaptation Center (Category II, 2020-2025).

The SCRR project is led by the [Center for Applied Research Solutions \(CARS\)](#) in partnership with [Trauma Transformed \(T²\)](#).

Our values and approach:

The work of recovery and renewal doesn't happen in isolation. The work of school crisis recovery and renewal is big, complicated and complex, and multifaceted, and it can be really hard. This was true even before the COVID-19 pandemic and waves of above-the-surface racial violence that so many of our students witnessed and experienced.

Our goal:

The goal of SCRR is to support students, educators, school staff, and school-based mental health clinicians to effectively implement trauma-informed crisis recovery and renewal strategies.

Introducing the 10 Pillars of Recovery and Renewal

School crisis recovery and renewal work is also about culture change.

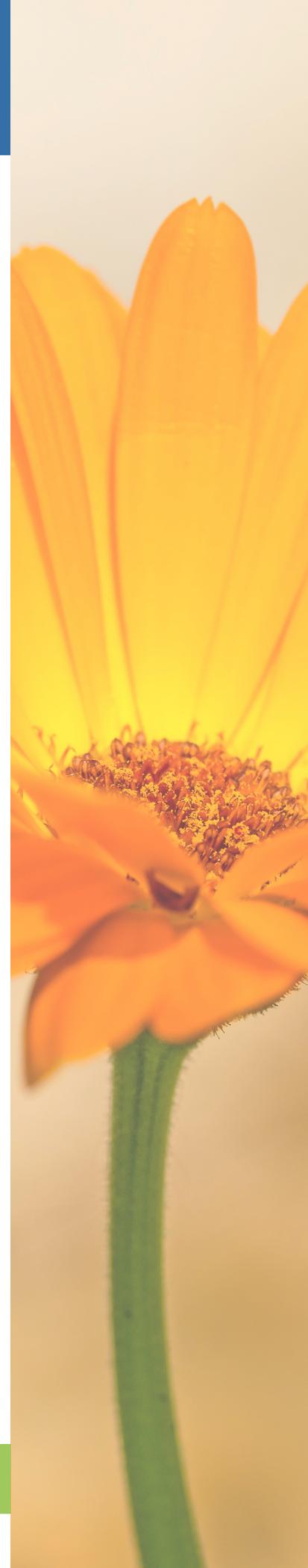
While many school communities have resources, funding, and practices for the immediate aftermath and response to a crisis, too many lack resources to lead schools through the entire crisis continuum and integrate practices that support recovery, and ultimately renewal.

The following guide captures content presented in [SCRR's Foundational Modules offered in 2020](#) providing introduction to the 10 pillars of recovery and renewal.

We encourage readers to use this guide to learn more about what we mean when we say school crisis recovery and renewal. This guide introduces the three core practices of recovery, the seven elements of renewal, and provides quotes from educators speaking to these practices and what they could look like in school communities.

As this guide is intended to be introductory, we invite interested school communities to connect with us for more resources, peer learning communities, and coaching to implement recovery and renewal practices in your school communities.

To learn more, check out our partners' [School Mental Health Crisis Leadership Lessons: Voices of Experience from Leaders](#), from which this content is based.





FOUNDATIONS OF RECOVERY

The recovery phase requires crisis leadership in the first three months, six months, and years after a harmful event. Judith Herman was one of the first psychologists to codify the importance of recovery in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992). Herman posits that the central recovery modality is connectedness and commonality: finding peer support and resonance.

Safety

Safety: Empowerment & restoring a sense of control

Safety is a construct and is contextual. Comprehensive safety includes more than physical safety; it also includes psychological, structural, interpersonal safety. Recovery leadership acknowledges the diverse experiences and needs that contribute to safety individually and collectively.

Remembrance & Mourning

Commemoration and memorialization

Remembrance and mourning is telling the story of the trauma or crisis (Herman, 1992). This can happen collectively (assembly meetings) or separately by advisory, grade, classroom, etc. Recovery leaders plan for what spaces need to be held together as a whole, and which members need differentiated recovery spaces.

Reconnection

Regulation, stabilization, re-orientation

Reconnection is focused on creating a future in the context of the past and present hurt. Recovery leaders bridge social connections to remind community members that, while crisis can fracture our connections to ourselves and each other, recovery encourages us to reconnect to ourselves and to each other.



Safety

A crisis can shatter our assumptions about safety, rob the self of power and control, and fragment our personal and institutional identities. The overall process of restoring safety, both physical and psychological, can be best characterized by the concept of conscious integration (Bloom, 2013). Social safety refers to our sense of feeling safe with others. For many students and educators, this may mean creating social safety for the first time, as what has never been experienced cannot be restored.

“Educators are role models in their classrooms and students learn more than reading, writing, and arithmetic from the adults at school. We teach them how to cope in times of uncertainty and fear. We model to them that it is okay if they cannot be okay. We respect them enough to tell them what happened, that it impacted us too, that we will be here with them, and that we will all heal together. They learn by watching how the adults respond. Students know when you’re lying to them and they know when adults gloss over the truth. Allowing them a space and a place to process their emotions is critical to the recovery process.”

- YESMINA LUCHSINGER



Remembrance & Mourning

The co-creation of memorials among students, or among students and staff, can help the recovery process. Collaboration on memorial projects builds community and may help students feel like they are moving forward from the crisis and creating distance from the event. The creation of tributes can also be an opportunity for students to take a leadership role in recovery. (See next page for deeper learning.)

“Don’t forget about the first responders. People that are engaged in the support of others suffer from extremely high stress levels. They are giving their 100% at an emotionally engaged level for an extended period of time. We need to make sure they come off that climax and allow them time and space to discharge those emotions.”

-ROBERT WEIRES, AS TOLD TO PAT SANBORN



Reconnection

Going back to normal isn’t possible: it’s important to distinguish between the desire to return to the way of being before the crisis (“normal times”) and what is actually necessary, which is a balance of flexibility and predictability. Students may crave the return of routine while at the same time struggle to succeed within previously “normal” education structures. As educators, we can support a return to pre-crisis routines while also acknowledging post-crisis changes.

“It is a delicate balance to hold space for processing while guiding a community back to routine. We should be understanding that healing takes time and the return to normalcy may not or cannot always happen within the confines of reporting requirements or deadlines. It is a delicate balance to hold space for processing while guiding a community back to routine.”

-YESMINA LUCHSINGER

Focus on: Remembrance and Mourning

Commemoration and memorialization activities present opportunities for students and staff to take an active role in constructing an enduring memory related to crisis. The goal of commemoration is to remember what was lost and what we wish to preserve, rather than to remember the moment or method of loss. **Note that how schools about planning is as important as what is planned for a memorial event.** For memorial events to have meaning for students, they must be involved in the planning and events should be relevant to their interests and developmental needs.

In May 2021, SCRR held a two-part series on "Commemoration and Memorialization", led by educators and school leaders. Captured below are some learnings and excerpts from the Commemoration and Memorialization series that can support remembrance and mourning during recovery.

Panel discussion prompt from the May "Commemoration and Memorialization" event: As teachers and educator-researchers, what have you seen go "right" with memorializations and commemorations? What have been examples of experiences that feel like the design, process, and event was done justly?

Embed institutional rituals and resources

"I think we've done a really beautiful job of centering particularly events like Dia de Los Muertos and institutionalizing it, hiring director of restorative practices, so that there are circles that are done normatively so that when there are events it's not this reactive thing that - it's a normative part of our school community students have the language to engage meaningfully. There are several teachers who have altars in their classroom to honor ancestors and to invite particular energies into our space."

-Tiffani Marie, Educator, Apocalyptic Education

Create pockets of safety; do with students, not for students.

"How then can we create (more) spaces of safety, of healing in a school system and institution that has been historically traditionally unsafe for ...(marginalized) students? There are pockets of safety, pockets of security for students, and so it may be that the institution that we work in is unsafe.... But we can create pockets and I often think about "how can I create a pocket?"

"For commemoration and memorialization: work with students."

-shea martin, Writer, Educator, Co-founder Liberate and Chill* Collective

Lead through discomfort

"There is a racialized component to the work. Who is going to outreach to the family first - that doesn't mean they're the only person who should. This is a place to be uncomfortable. These are the moments to recognize that maybe the last time you spoke to that parent wasn't great. As a principal, it's your call to make even if it's that, unless someone has already done it. And, activate your team. There will be mistakes and, at times, we plan memorials where families don't come. And that's ok."

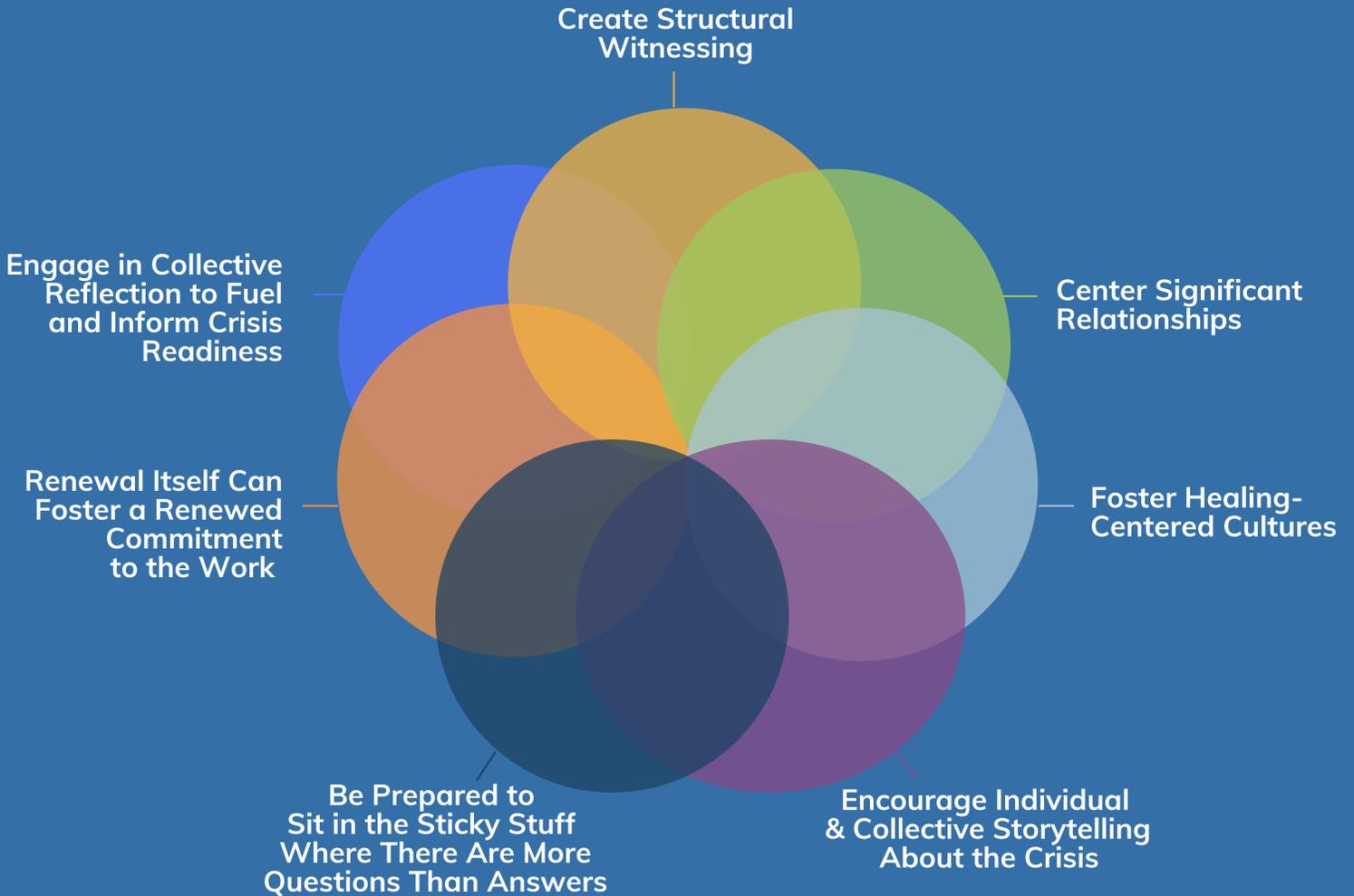
-Beth "Silb" Silbergeld, Principal and Administrator

To view more resources on commemoration and memorialization, visit <https://schoolcrisishealing.org/events-learning-opportunities/memorialization-and-commemoration-navigating-creating-and-holding-space-in-our-schools-after-loss/>



ELEMENTS OF RENEWAL

This section introduces what renewal leadership looks like and offers seven elements that can foster school crisis renewal



Renewal involves the leaders themselves. This is the phase of crisis leadership where leaders are not only externally focused, but internally introspective. Renewal after a crisis asks for leaders of school communities, organizations, teams, or sites to help all involved make meaning of what is happening and what happened, to ground and try to make sense of things that don't make sense.

Create Structural Witnessing

When we talk about “holding space,” we mean the practice of offering the experience of being heard without fixing, solving, or treating. This practice is essential to our healing and renewal.

“*Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprint. But WHAT everyone has in common is that no matter how they grieve, they share a need for their grief to be witnessed. That doesn't mean needing someone to try and lessen it or reframe it for them. The need is for someone to be fully present to the magnitude of their loss without trying to point out the silver lining.*”

- David Kessler, Author

Center Significant Relationships

School mental health renewal leaders recognize that both healing and harm happen in relationships; the former emerges most when community members feel unified with one another and contribute to each other's repair.

“*Renewal requires a social-emotional leadership lens that often is least discussed, funded, or developed. Renewal after a crisis asks for leaders of school communities, organizations, teams, or sites to help all involved make meaning of what is happening and what happened, to ground and try to make sense of things that don't make sense.*”

- Leora Wolf-Prusan, SCRR Project Director

Foster Healing-Centered Cultures

Renewal leadership is fostering cultures that are healing-centered. This can be done formally through ritual or ceremony, or informally through continuous collective inquiry and ongoing peer-to-peer opportunities. This can also include utilizing real-world-driven pedagogy such as project-based learning or other strategies to scaffold students' investigation of the root causes of the harm.

“*While in immediate response to crisis, communication will be short, direct, and focused on action. The recovery and renewal period require the opposite: time and space for the adult community to share complex feelings with one another as they rebuild the safety and fabric of their community.*”

-Kelly Knoche, Executive Director of The Teaching Well

Encourage Individual & Collective Storytelling About the Crisis

Meaning-making is impossible without storytelling; renewal is impossible without meaning-making. Storytelling helps school communities create a coherent narrative, a complete story of self, that can help foster healing.

“*Cataclysmic events often reliably produce a crisis of identity, personal agency, and meaning for those impacted and subsequently, a search to reconstruct, make meaning, or make new narratives to make sense of the event.*”

-Jen Leland, SCRR Field Director

Be Prepared to Sit in the Sticky Stuff Where There Are More Questions Than Answers

Crises are often transformative for both impacted individuals and communities. Once they understand the transformation the crisis has affected in themselves, educators are positioned to lead students and peers through a cycle of radical inquiry. Through this process, school communities can begin to understand what the crisis revealed about the strengths and weaknesses of the collective response. This inquiry will cause discomfort. It is uncomfortable to sit with hard questions about which people were well-served by the response and which were not. These reflections require courage, but they are also an opportunity to transform systems towards greater equity.

“ *This level of reflection and inquiry in relation to the Camp Fire is an ongoing process as Butte County residents and leaders move towards stability. This is not a process to rush. It requires multiple iterations, a great deal of patience, and ample self-compassion.* ”

-Sandra Azevedo & Matt Reddam, Butte County Office of Education

Renewal Itself Can Foster a Renewed Commitment to the Work

The hard questions we ask can themselves inspire us to do more and do better. The inventory of the challenges we face in the years after a crisis can help us focus our efforts to transform our school communities into safer, more equitable, and more supportive environments. The renewal period can be a time of collective recommitment to the ideals we hold for our schools and our students. Through renewal practices, we can build the cultures that sustain our work and remind us of our deepest values.

“ *Culture is developed over time through the ways we relate with one another and the meaning we make of these shared experiences. We must cultivate compassionate, responsive, curious, and courageous cultures every day so that these ways of being are in our nature when times get extraordinarily tough and uncertain.* ”

-The Meaning Makers Collective

Engage in Collective Reflection to Fuel and Inform Crisis Readiness

The phases of crisis, recovery, and renewal are not linear, but cyclical. As we interrogate our plans, policies, and practices at each phase of a crisis, we build collective knowledge of how to reform and revise our leadership strategies moving forward. This can be done for and with the community the school services.

“ *For our school, we wanted to reflect on our institutional ability to address hostile conflicts, gang tensions (though our alumnus [who was murdered] was not gang affiliated), campus trespassers, and how we communicate and maintain our communal and behavioral expectations. The goal of such reflection is to make sure our expectations are clear, fair, and respectfully aligned with the broader community's high standards for their children. It also means that we take time to reflect on whether our practices as a school community are consistent, compassionate, and geared towards the humanizing development of our students as healthy, empowered individuals.* ”

-Darrick Smith, Professor and Educator

Connect with SCRR

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