Reducing Gun Violence in Schools: A School Counselor's Role

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Abstract

This article focuses on gun violence in the school setting and the role of the counselor in helping to reduce gun violence. Gun violence in schools has become pervasive for many reasons, including lack of adequate support staff, undiagnosed mental health issues, students who experience isolation, anger, depression, bullying, as well as access to guns and rifles combined with a failure to conduct extensive background checks on purchasers of weapons of mass destruction. This article explores the instrumental role school counselors have in identifying, assisting, supporting, and empowering students who are struggling mentally, behaviorally, socially, and academically. A definition of gun violence, statistics, warning signs of perpetrators, and the impact of gun violence on students, are presented.

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Gun violence within schools has become more prevalent than in the past. Some reasons for the growing number of school shootings include, but are not limited to, having a lack of school counselors and mental health practitioners in the school setting to work with at-risk students, lack of fiscal resources and budgeting issues that prevent hiring mental health professionals, access to fire arms without extensive background checks, undiagnosed mental illnesses, students with violent tendencies, or students who are isolated, bullied, angry, are looking to retaliate in order to feel empowered, and experience a sense of control as a result of intentional mass chaos.

TIME Magazine recently assessed reports on 86 attacks in EveryTown's data since 2013 that are labeled as, *an attack on other persons resulting in injury or death*. School shootings were characterized as having at least one victim injured or killed, either the shooter or victim was a student or teacher, the attack occurred on school property, and injury occurred as a result of gunfire (Wilson, 2018). From 2013 to 2019, there have been 549 school shootings in the United States (EveryTown, 2020a). In 2013, EveryTown began to examine gun shootings in K-12 schools and universities and over the next 3 years identified 184 incidents (both fatal and non-fatal) assaults, suicides, and unintentional shootings (EveryTown, 2020a). Research substantiates that of the shootings carried out by minors in primary and secondary levels, more than half of those perpetrators obtained a gun from home (EveryTown, 2020b). Research has consistently shown that regardless of those involved in a shooting or the context of the shooting, gun violence in schools (both K-12 and universities) undermines and destroys

the sense of safety and security that all students should be guaranteed in their learning environments (EveryTown, 2020b).

Between 2013-2015, EveryTown identified 184 school shootings and approximately 55% of those shootings took place in K-12 schools and 45% took place on college or university campuses nationwide (EveryTown, 2020a). In comparison to other countries, including European and Asian countries, the United States has the highest rate of gun violence school tragedies due to gun access and a lack of mental health services to serve all of those in need (Erickson, 2018). According to the Statista Research Department (2020), 116 school shootings took place in 2018—the highest number of school shootings of any year since 1970. 110 school shootings took place in 2019. 54 school shootings took place in 2017, which means that between 2018-2019 school shootings have more than doubled in this country in the K-12 and university settings. School shootings are taking place nationwide. Therefore, it is important to note that school shootings are not limited to a particular geographic location and impact students from all backgrounds, races, religious affiliations, and socioeconomic statuses.

Warning Signs of At-Risk Students

According to the National School Safety Center (Kamenetz, 2018), there are definitive warning signs displayed by students who are at risk for carrying out an act of violence in a school setting. Most school shootings in the United States are perpetrated by male students ages 14-17. Additionally, many of the perpetrators may have a violent temper, may be cruel to animals, and may struggle with mental health issues. These issues may include diagnoses (i.e., conduct disorder, oppositional defiance disorder) or other troubling behaviors such as: bringing weapons to school, posting cryptic

messages about harming themselves or others on social media, posting disconcerting pictures of weapons on social media, making threats, having serious disciplinary issues including suspension or expulsion, having few friends, bullying others or is a victim of bullying, having a preoccupation with weapons, having a lack of family or guardian supervision, being fascinated by violence, or being depressed or having suicidal thoughts or tendencies (National School Safety Center, 2019).

It is important to clarify that a direct correlation does *not* exist between mental illness and acts of violence. In fact, those struggling with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence (Kamenetz, 2018). It is also relevant to note that each of these warning signs are indicative of the fact that students demonstrating and displaying these behaviors are in need of mental health support. One in five K-12 students struggle with a mental health disorder and four out of five of those students struggling with mental health issues are untreated. Additionally, given that there is typically one school counselor for every 500 students and one school psychologist for every 1,400 students, there are likely students who are in significant need of assistance, but are not being helped because there aren't enough practitioners and support staff to identify and assist these struggling students (Kamenetz, 2018). In light of the number of atrocities being committed in schools nationwide, there is a considerable need to allocate funds for mental health awareness, and to hire more school counselors and mental health support staff who can identify, work with, counsel, and provide resources and referrals to students who demonstrate a tendency to carry out violent acts (Teasley, 2018).

Impact of Gun Violence on Students

Gun violence has a detrimental and a long-term negative impact on students and stakeholders. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2019) found that a surge in gun violence (including gun violence at schools or in communities) has taken a major toll on children and adolescents. Homicide is the second leading cause of death amongst youth 5-18 years of age. According to the CDC's Nationwide Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2018b), approximately 6% of students nationwide have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the year before the survey and 7% of students had not gone to school at least one day during the 30 days before the survey was taken due to feeling unsafe at school. Additionally, according to Everytown (2019) firearms are the leading cause of death of Black children and teens in America and they are 14 times more likely that their White counterparts to die by gun homicide. Firearm related fatalities are the second leading cause of death for children and teens (Everytown, 2019). According to Everytown (2019), students who experience school related violence are less likely to succeed in school and may suffer negative impacts to their physical health, which may be causal factors in drug abuse, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and having aggressive and violent behavior themselves.

More specifically, when gun violence occurs in the schools, students' and stakeholders' sense of safety and protection are shattered. Gun violence compels those to feel the ultimate sense of vulnerability, rawness, trepidation, lack of invincibility, recognize their mortality, and experience an extreme degree fear that is paralyzing (Everytown, 2019). Unsurprisingly, research substantiates that school shootings have

long term and deleterious impacts on the students, stakeholders, and community at large. Students who experience school shootings are more likely to struggle with depression and anxiety. They also have lower test scores by approximately 5% in comparison to students who do not experience or witness gun violence (EveryTown, 2019). According to Beland & Kim (2016), students exposed to gun violence at schools were less likely to graduate, and test scores in math and English were substantially lower than their counterparts who did not experience gun violence. This study further substantiates the fact that safety and order are paramount conditions for student learning. In addition to struggling with truancy and lower test scores, the researchers also indicated that many students exposed to gun violence struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The researchers noted that damage to the hippocampus (controlling memory integration) is possible, which may cause difficulty concentrating. They may also struggle with peer problems, since students who witness gun violence may have a reduced ability to form and maintain secure attachments (Beland & Kim, 2016). These data outline an issue that many find staggering in scope, as well as frightening and infuriating. An important policy/cultural question is: When is enough, enough and what can be done to prevent further atrocities from occurring so that students feel a sense of empowerment and security?

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

School counselors have an instrumental role in identifying and assisting students who are at risk for potentially carrying out acts of violence. School counselors are leaders, change agents, and advocates for all students (ASCA, 2018), especially those students who are unable to advocate and have a voice for themselves. However, due to

their large caseloads and challenging responsibilities, school counselors alone may not be able to assist each student who may be struggling. Collaboration among stakeholders is key—it truly does take a village to promote success for all. Teachers and administrators who work with troubled students on a daily basis are encouraged to reach out to school counselors if they have a concern so that the school counselor is aware of the situation, can assess the degree of the threat posed, and provide appropriate resources. In addition to having a crisis plans (Studer & Salter, 2010), it is vital for counselors to create a caring, safe, inclusive, and engaging school climate, as these characteristics serve to involve, motivate, validate, empower, and help students to gain a sense of belonging.

Bullying Prevention

Counselors are encouraged to raise awareness about bullying, including reasons why students bully (power and control) and the long-term harmful consequences associated with bullying, which may include low self-esteem, poor social skills, isolation, depression, anxiety, truancy, self-mutilation, suicide, or homicide (Simckes, 2017). Facilitating small groups, classroom, and school-wide prevention programs, such as the No Place For Hate Program developed by the Anti-Defamation League, have been shown to be powerful interventions to use to create a school climate that is inclusive, tolerant, and accepting. It is important to promote a school climate where there is a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. Research has shown that many perpetrators of school violence are withdrawn, isolated, and are often victims of bullying who may consequently use violence and aggression rather than communication as a way to retaliate and regain power (Zuckerman, 2016). Therefore, it is essential that counselors

work collaboratively with all stakeholders to emphasize the risks associated with bullying, encourage students to stand up to those who are bullying, and implement evidence based anti-bullying programs in schools. Programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Bullying Prevention-PBIS Program, and Second Step and the Bullying Prevention Unit (Colorado Department of Education, 2018) provide a few examples of useful bullying programs for schools.

Creating a Safe Environment

One of the most vital roles of the school counselor is to work diligently to create a safe, engaging, motivating, strengths-based, and inclusive environment where students feel accepted and empowered to reach their fullest potential. Counselors and critical stakeholders are encouraged to help create a climate that is reflective of and conducive to the students' individual needs (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). In order to create a safe climate, school counselors are encouraged to conduct needs assessments in order to determine the most prevalent needs, as well as the degree to which the need exists. Based upon the assessment feedback, the counselors can then develop prevention and intervention strategies to address perceived needs. Additionally, counselors can create safety surveys for students to complete in order to obtain student and stakeholder feedback regarding how safe and secure students feel at school (Bray, 2016). Building partnerships with agencies outside of the school setting is also beneficial, so if students are struggling with deeper rooted issues, school counselors can refer them to agencies or advocacy groups. In order to promote a healthy school climate, counselors can work to establish advisory councils that include all stakeholders in order to examine various perspectives of issues taking place in the school and

surrounding community (Bray, 2016). Each of these measures helps to enhance and foster a school climate that is inclusive, interactive, and dynamic.

Visibility

It is essential for counselors to have visibility in a school setting because they are the liaisons working with all stakeholders to promote student success. Counselors are leaders, advocates, and change agents, and therefore need to have a presence throughout the school so that students are *aware* of their counselor and feel comfortable approaching them with their concerns (Bray, 2016). Students and stakeholders benefit when they see a counselor's familiar face as someone who is genuine and helps students be connected and empowered to be successful. Regarding school violence, it is especially important for the counselor to be visible, as stakeholders need a *go-to* person who is trained to understand concerns, possesses mental health awareness, and can communicate with struggling students (Bray, 2016). In addition to being school leaders, counselors are also facilitators who develop relationships with all stakeholders to foster collaboration. Collaboration is essential, since counselors do have such large caseloads. If a student is struggling academically, it is through collaboration with stakeholders that everyone working together can meet the needs of the student. Research has shown that at times students carry out acts of violence in order to be seen and recognized (Bray, 2016). Counselors are unifying staff members who build relationships with stakeholders and work to create an environment in which students feel safe and included. Thus, through making connections, being visible, helping students feel heard and validated, promoting a sense of belonging, and emphasizing self-care and wellness, school counselors prepare to keep schools safe.

Identifying and Assisting At-Risk Students

As collaborators and leaders, school counselors are instrumental in reaching out to students who may be struggling with truancy, academics, behavior, or social isolation. One of the first steps in mitigating gun violence is to identify and be mindful of the students who are struggling and who demonstrate the potential to act in a volatile manner. School counselors can work with students who are struggling, eat lunch with them, or connect them with other peers. Additionally, school counselors can provide struggling students with leadership roles to help empower them and provide them with a sense of control and belonging. Counselors can also facilitate peer mediation programs, which can teach students healthy and constructive problem-solving skills, help them to correct negative behaviors, and help isolated students feel included. Additionally, counselors can recommend learning and volunteer projects to students who may be struggling, as it may help them be a part of the larger community. Service learning promotes engagement and positive behavioral change (Bray, 2016).

Threat Assessments and Crisis Interventions

Threat assessments are critical components in helping to identify at risk students, as they provide insight into the degree to which students pose a threat to themselves or others. It is beneficial for counselors to be able to identify early warning signs that may be indicative of a student who is struggling. Warning signs may include behavioral issues, being bullied, suicidal or homicidal tendencies, drug/alcohol usage, withdrawal, violent drawings, outbursts of anger, or impulsiveness (Bray, 2016). Using threat assessments helps counselors to determine how likely a person is to repeat an incident or follow through on a threat. Counselors and other stakeholders must work efficiently to

determine whether a student is a danger to themselves or others. Conducting threat assessments in a collaborative manner is helpful because stakeholders may provide additional perspectives concerning the threat that students pose in regard to their personality, life experiences, academics, home life, social situations, and previous peer interactions. Warning signs are not indicative that a student poses an absolute threat, but they do provide counselors and stakeholders with opportunities to meet with and address student concerns in order to determine the most impactful intervention (Bray, 2016). It is important for counselors to be attentive of student backgrounds, especially those who have experienced trauma, so that the student can be encouraged to focus on how the trauma has impacted them and be offered resources and referrals to support them.

In addition, crisis training may also be very beneficial. Counselors can help organize teacher training, work with the school resource officers, and enhance outreach to parents. Counselors are also encouraged to facilitate social emotional learning groups addressing conflict resolution, time and stress management, motivation, leadership, optimism, and emotion regulation for students. Crisis training helps stakeholders learn how to de-escalate potentially dangerous or volatile situations, how to intervene, and when to intervene. It provides school personnel with enhanced empathy skills, compassion, and approachability (Bray, 2016).

Promoting Resiliency

Promoting resilience and helping students to recognize that we all face conflict is critical. Resilience strengthens students' abilities to adapt and bounce back during times of stress. Counselors and stakeholders can emphasize that students cannot allow

conflict or adversity to define them and that they can persevere, which is key to being successful in school and life. Building resilience is a vital part of reducing school violence, as students who possess resilience have more effective coping and problem-solving skills, may be less impulsive, and more optimistic about the future, than their less resilient peers (Riopel, 2019). Counselors can help students build resilience by communicating, normalizing, providing a strong support system, having classroom discussions, helping students learn from failures, facilitating counseling groups, and teaching classroom guidance lessons that promote resilience, challenge, motivate, and empowerment (Price-Mitchell, 2015). Enhancing resilience has been shown to help students improve their coping skills and reduce their feelings of stress, anxiety, and lack of control. Students who possess resilience are better able to advocate, lead, support, and refer other students who may be struggling academically, behaviorally, socially, or emotionally (Cassidy, 2015).

Increasing Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is imperative for student achievement. Research has shown consistently that there is a positive correlation between parent involvement and student success (Garcia & Thornton, 2014). Parent engagement in schools is important for student learning and development (CDC, 2018a). As a protective factor, research has shown that increased parental engagement is linked to better student behavior, higher achievement, and enhanced social skills, as well as reduced engagement in unhealthy at-risk behaviors (CDC, 2018a). Counselors can encourage parents to set SMART goals with their children, raise expectations, look at children's grades and test scores to identify academic performance, develop a relationship with their child's

teacher, and monitor their child's progress to determine whether their child needs additional help and support. When parents remain engaged, they promote greater student academic success and protective factors such as motivation and communication skills. These skills will help students to feel safer, more driven, and supported, thereby possibly reducing the risk of violence (CDC, 2018a).

Counselors can encourage parents to help promote a safe school environment by including them in planning, updating them on their child's progress, and addressing any concerns they have regarding the mental health, social, emotional, behavioral, and academic performance of their student. Additionally, parents can serve on the school's improvement or violence prevention plan and join parent-teacher organizations (Bray, 2016), which allows them to offer their feedback and inclusion to the decision-making process. Moreover, parents are encouraged to set high expectations for their children, encourage them to be accountable for their behavior, and be autonomous. Parents are also encouraged to monitor their children's social media accounts (Bray, 2016). Many times, at-risk students post cryptic messages on social media that may appear to be threatening to themselves or others. It is imperative that parents are aware of what their children are posting so that if there are messages or information that is disconcerting, the parents can communicate their concern with the stakeholders in the school. Parents who are proactive, involved, aware, and supportive may be helpful in preventing a tragedy from occurring (CDC, 2018a).

Group Counseling Themes for Social and Emotional Learning

When the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed national standards for school counselors, it integrated the social emotional domain in their model

to help students manage their emotions and develop their interpersonal skills in order to be more successful (ASCA, 2014). School counselors are trained to foster growth mindsets and promote positive behaviors in students that help to create a career-ready, engaging, and safe school climate (ASCA, 2014). School counselors are encouraged to integrate social emotional learning into their direct services to help students enhance their conflict resolution, emotion regulation, communication, accountability, and interpersonal skills**.** Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and apply the knowledge and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020b). Soft skills include the attitudes, competencies, and behaviors that enable young people to perform well and achieve their goals (CASEL, 2020b). Effective soft skills that have been shown to positively impact students' performance are motivation, self-concept, self-sufficiency, peer relationships, and self-regulation. Social emotional learning promotes knowledge regarding self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. Counselors are encouraged to address both intrapersonal and interpersonal soft skills including self-regulation, time/stress management, growth mindsets, leadership, resilience, listening, problem solving, accountability, assertiveness, and collaboration. These skills are essential for all students to promote academic and life success (CASEL, 2020a). When school counselors address these soft skills, at-risk students can learn and master skills that could help them to feel more in control, empowered, understood, and accepted.

Hopefully as a result, students may communicate their concerns verbally and peacefully, rather than through physical aggression or violence.

Managing Anger

Many students who carry out acts of violence are trying to cope with anger, depression, frustration, resentment, and rage (Bray, 2016). Therefore, counselors who conduct small groups addressing anger can identify students who are struggling with their anger and teach them ways to constructively, rather than destructively, cope with their anger in a healthier manner. Counselors can work with students on emotion regulation, trigger identification, meditation, mindfulness, deep breathing, emotion freedom techniques (EFT), communication, and paradigm shifts in thinking. In addition, it may be beneficial to implement anger management programs (e.g., Anger Coping Program), which allows students to model, problem solve, and use positive reinforcement to reduce anger so that it doesn't perpetuate and intensify (Furlong, Felix, Sharkey, & Larson, 2005).

Conflict Resolution

Counselors can also facilitate groups related to conflict resolution in order to raise students' awareness regarding effective problem solving to reach a win-win outcome (Cromwell, 2012). According to the Conflict Resolution Education Report (Cromwell, 2012), the purpose of conflict resolution is to help create a climate in which students feel free of danger and can work towards achievement. Negotiation, mediation, and consensus of decision making are three critical components of conflict resolution (Cromwell, 2012). There are various conflict resolution programs that can be implemented including the Peace Education Foundation which provides information on

conflict resolution for grades P-12, the Peaceable Classroom Approach, which utilizes cooperative learning methods to help students resolve conflict, and the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program which uses professional development for stakeholders, peer mediation, parent training, and integrating conflict resolution into classroom instruction (Cromwell, 2012). Especially today in our technology-driven society, students need effective communication and listening skills, and have flexibility and open-mindedness to other people's viewpoints (Confident Counselors, 2019). Conflict resolution skills are helpful when students are feeling angry or spiteful. Rather than acting in a destructive manner, they may choose to use their verbal skills to express themselves in an assertive and confident manner to take ownership of their emotions instead of blaming others (Confident Counselors, 2019). Group session topics may include small vs. big problems, walking away, talking it out, types of conflict, reporting conflict, perspective taking, cyberbullying, aggressive vs. assertive behavior, and forgiveness vs. revenge (Confident Counselors, 2019). Conflict resolution skills help build relationships, focus on goal achievement, enhance commitment, and empower students to discuss and resolve issues in a peaceful and constructive manner so that conflicts do not escalate.

Personal Accountability

Counselors can facilitate groups on personal accountability. Accountability is important so that students can engage in reflective practice and assess their role in a situation. They can decide what worked, what didn't work, and how they can improve moving forward, in order to grow and mature. Counselors can teach students to use *I messages*: I feel _____ when you _____ because_____ in order to encourage students to take ownership of their feelings rather than blaming or shaming

others (Martin, 2004). Teaching students to use *I messages* rather than *you messages* is important, so that they can express their emotions assertively and directly, rather than blaming others. Having students practice *I* messages is helpful so that they have practice taking responsibility for their feelings. (Martin, 2004). Counselors can also raise students' awareness regarding the fact that every action has a reaction and every action has a consequence and to consider the implications and effects of the decisions. In addition, it is important for counselors to teach students empathy so that they can experience what another person feels, which fosters deeper understanding, belonging, validation, compassion, inclusion, and acceptance. Being accountable and looking at themselves, their choices, and behaviors, as well as taking responsibility for their actions and inactions, is instrumental in their journey towards adulthood.

Empathy

Counselors can facilitate small groups that focus on empathy to help students build compassion, understand diverse perspectives, and recognize emotions associated with tragedy, loss, and grief. Empathy is a critical soft skill for students to be productive citizens both at school and at home (Harvard School of Education, 2018). Empathy enhances classroom engagement, achievement, improved communication skills, positive relationships, and reduces bullying and aggressive behaviors (Harvard School of Education, 2018). Counselors can encourage students to imagine the emotions that their peers are experiencing by experiencing those emotions themselves. Thus, being able to empathize may reduce violence as potential perpetrators may be able to visualize the negative outcomes that may result from their actions. In addition, increasing empathy may develop greater moral identity, reflection, perspective taking,

self-regulation, and collaboration (Borba, 2018). By building empathy, students may become less impulsive, more thoughtful, and able to negative impact their actions may have on their peers, faculty, and community at large.

Making Decisions

Counselors can facilitate groups on decision making so that students can learn effective ways to make healthy and constructive choices. Counselors can teach students how to make decision trees to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of decisions and to determine logical consequences. Logical consequences entail asking students to consider what will happen if they do something, as well as what will happen if they do not do something; allowing them to compare costs and rewards. Decision-making groups can help students consider the impacts of their decisions on themselves and others, build awareness, and make choices that are in their best interest and in the best interest of others (CASEL, 2020a).

Emotion Regulation

Counselors can facilitate small groups that concentrate on emotion regulation to teach students to have greater control over their emotions and to be more proactive rather than reactive. Emotion regulation is an essential soft skill that enables people to act less impulsively, to think before they act, and consider potential consequences. It provides people with greater self-control and empowerment (Cuncic, 2019). Counselors can teach emotion regulation through accountability via mindfulness and focusing on the present moment, cognitive reappraisal/reframing, and changing unhealthy thought patterns (Cuncic, 2019). Other strategies include keeping Post-it Notes as reminders to make positive choices, counting before acting, considering consequences of actions,

deep breathing, and exercising positive self-talk. Students who possess strong emotion regulation skills are better able to manage their frustration, anger, or discontentment in more appropriate, healthy, and socially acceptable ways. Students may be able to regulate and deescalate their feelings before they choose to let emotions gain control and influence their choices.

Summary

Gun violence often has disastrous impacts on the lives of students, families, and communities. School counselors can use a variety of strategies within their school counseling programs to reduce the amount of gun violence among students. These strategies can be implemented through direct and indirect services. In addition, providing students with a way to anonymously report information that they may have is imperative, so that more students may share warnings or threats with counselors and other school personnel. It is important that they feel safe reporting information without fear of retaliation.

School counselors have an important role in addressing and mitigating gun violence in schools. Despite their challenging caseloads, counselors are encouraged to collaborate and consult with critical stakeholders including teachers, parents, administrators, and community members in order to identify and assist at-risk students who demonstrate the capacity to harm themselves or others. Creating a safe and inclusive environment that is challenging, rigorous, engaging, motivating, based on strengths, celebratory, and accepting is pivotal in terms of reducing violence. Students need to have a sense of belonging and feel important, safe, valued, and connected to school. As leaders and advocates, school counselors can help students find meaning

and purpose, and to move forward in a positive trajectory. Creating a safe and inviting

climate is vital so that students who possess information about potential threats feel

comfortable and confident to come forward and disclose the information.

Moreover, school counselors can facilitate small groups and classroom guidance

lessons on soft skills, empathy, conflict resolution, anger management, accountability,

time/stress management, motivation, optimism, emotion regulation, communication and

collaboration as a way to promote that every student feels connected, involved,

engaged, and accepted. School counselors can also work with stakeholders to identify,

assist, and support students who may be struggling and provide them with the

immediate resources and referrals that they need in order to be more successful

academically, behaviorally, emotionally, psychologically, and socially. School

counselors can empower, motivate, recognize, and help those who may not be able to

help themselves. Despite challenging workloads, school counselors can assist, guide,

mentor, and inspire their students. It is important for counselors to emphasize tolerance

and acceptance over hate, provide education, create a safe and secure climate that is

uplifting and that isn't paralyzed by fear and terror, determine those in need of

assistance, and work tirelessly to provide resources and a support network so that all

students can survive, succeed, and prevail.

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