

Support at Home for Children in Crisis What Parents Can Do

1. **Focus on your children over the next day or so.** Tell them you love them and everything will be okay. Try to help them understand what has happened, keeping in mind their developmental level. Be available to talk with your children should they express fear or concern.
2. **Make time to talk with your children.** Remember that your child may hear about this event in the community. Therefore it is important that you talk to your child. Take some time and determine what you wish to say.
3. **Stay close to your children.** Your physical presence will reassure your child and give you the opportunity to monitor their reaction. Many children will want actual physical contact. Give plenty of hugs. Let them sit close to you, and make sure to take extra time at bedtime to cuddle and to reassure them that they are loved and safe.
4. **Physical Reactions** such as headaches, fatigue, etc., can be normal responses to fear and a child's attempts to avoid thoughts of the event. Provide labels, especially for younger children, for the feelings they are experiencing, such as sad, afraid, angry, etc. Recognize that regressive behavior such as nail biting and thumb sucking, as well as acting out behaviors are normal reactions and should be discussed rather than punished.
5. **Be cognizant of the amount of time your child is viewing media coverage (television, Internet, and social) of this event.** Consider your child's developmental level and his/her ability to process these sad and tragic events.
6. **Maintain a "normal" routine.** To the extent possible, stick to your family's normal routine for dinner, homework, chores, bedtime, etc., **but don't be inflexible.** Children may have a hard time concentrating on schoolwork or falling asleep at night.
7. **Spend extra time reading or playing quiet games with your children before bed.** These activities are calming, foster a sense of closeness and security, and reinforce a sense of normalcy. Spend more time tucking them in. Let them sleep with a light on if they ask for it.
8. **Safeguard your children's physical health.** Stress can take a physical toll on children as well as adults. Make sure your children get appropriate sleep, exercise and nutrition.
9. **Consider spending time with family and concentrating on hopeful thoughts.** You may want to consider spending time with community members you routinely gather with for support. It might also be helpful to encourage your child write a poem, or draw a picture to help them express their feelings and feel that they are supporting the victims and their families.
10. **Find out what resources your school has in place to help children cope.** Please reach out to appropriate school staff if your child is having difficulty coping with this sad event. School staff members are here to support our parents and our children. If changes in your child's behavior or personality concern you, seek the support of a mental health professional.