

Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth after the Recent Shooting

The recent shooting has been an extremely frightening experience, and the days, weeks, and months following can be very stressful. Your children and family will recover over time, especially with the support of relatives, friends, and community. But families and youth may have had different experiences during and after the shooting, including those who may have experienced physical injury, involvement in police investigation, worry about the safety of family members and friends, and loss of loved ones. How long it takes to recover will depend on what happened to you and your family during and after this event. Some adults and children have been seriously injured and will require medical treatment and long-term rehabilitation. Over time, some youth and adults will return to normal routines, while others may struggle. Children and teens may react differently to the shooting depending on their age and prior experiences. Expect that youth may respond in different ways, and be supportive and understanding of different reactions, even when you are having your own children.

Common Reactions

- Feelings of anxiety, fear, and worry about the safety of self and others
- Fears that another shooting may occur
- Changes in behavior:
 - o Increase in activity level
 - o Decrease in concentration and attention
 - o Increase in irritability and anger
 - o Sadness, grief, and/or withdrawal
 - o Radical changes in attitudes and expectations for the future
 - o Increases or decreases in sleep and appetite
 - o Engaging in harmful habits like drinking, using drugs, or doing things that are harmful to self or others
 - o Lack of interest in usual activities, including how they spend time with friends
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches, aches and pains)
- Changes in school and work-related habits and behavior with peers and family
- Staying focused on the shooting (talking repeatedly about it)
- Strong reactions to reminders of the shooting (seeing friends who were also present during shooting, media images, smoke, police, memorials)
- Increased sensitivity to sounds (loud noises, screaming)

- x **Be patient.** Children may be more distracted and need added help with chores or homework once school is in session.
- x **Address withdrawal/shame/guilt feelings** Explain that these feelings are common and correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done. Reassure them that they did not cause any of the deaths and that it was not a punishment for anything that anyone did “wrong.” You can say, “Many children, and even adults, feel like you do. They are angry