



November 1, 2021

Dear School Districts, Staff, Educators, and Caregivers of Students,

The recent Gilroy tragedy, which occurred on October 30, 2021, and recent events in the U.S., has deeply affected our communities and our schools. Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) has developed a packet of information and resources to help you during this time.

The packet includes:

- Information and Guidelines for helping students/children after mass violence
- Tips for helping school-age children with traumatic grief
- Age related reactions to traumatic events
- Restoring a sense of safety
- Information on helping children heal
- Coping skills
- List of contact information for crisis support, behavioral health services, and resources

Sincerely,

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Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department

99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.)
2. Put on fake tattoos
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal)
4. Scribble/doodle on paper
5. Be with other people
6. Watch a favorite TV show
7. Post on web boards and answer others' posts
8. Go see a movie
9. Do a word-search or crossword
10. Do schoolwork
11. Play a musical instrument
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair
13. Sing
14. Study the sky
15. Punch a punching bag
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut
17. Let yourself cry
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired)
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath
20. Play with a pet
21. Go shopping
22. Clean something
23. Knit or sew
24. Read a good book
25. Listen to music
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray)
27. Meditate
28. Go somewhere very public
29. Bake cookies
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/Books
31. Paint or draw
32. Rip paper into itty bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball
34. Write a letter or send an email
35. Plan your dream room (colors/furniture)
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal
37. Hyper-focus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance
39. Make hot chocolate, a milkshake or a smoothie
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Doh
41. Build a pillow fort
42. Go for a nice long drive
43. Complete something you've been putting off
44. Draw on yourself with a marker
45. Take up a new hobby
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal
47. Look at pretty things like flowers or art
48. Create or build something
49. Pray
50. Make a list of blessings in your life
51. Read the Bible
52. Go to a friend's house
53. Jump on a trampoline
54. Watch an old happy movie
55. Contact a hotline/your therapist
If you want, you can call us
1-800-448-3000
56. Talk to someone close to you
57. Ride a bicycle
58. Feed the ducks, birds or squirrels
59. Color
60. Memorize a poem, play or song
61. Stretch
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything)
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe
65. Watch fish
66. Make a CD/play-list of your favorite songs
67. Play the "15 Minute Game" (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event
69. Plant some seeds
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible
72. Sort through/edit your pictures
73. Play with a balloon
74. Give yourself a facial
75. Play with a favorite childhood toy
76. Start collecting something
77. Play a video/computer game
78. Clean up trash at your local park
79. Look at yourlifeyourvoice.org
80. Text or call an old friend
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter
82. Look up new words and use them
83. Rearrange furniture
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send
85. Smile at five people
86. Play with your little brother/sister/niece/nephew
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend)
88. Put a puzzle together
89. Clean your room/closet
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels or backbends
91. Yoga
92. Teach your pet a new trick
93. Learn a new language
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot
95. Get together with friends to play frisbee, soccer or basketball
96. Hug a friend or family member
97. Search on-line for new songs/artists
98. Make a list of goals for the week/month/year/5 years
99. Perform a random act of kindness

YOUR Life YOUR Voice

www.yourlifeyourvoice.org

Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic Event



A fundamental goal of parenting is to help children grow and thrive to the best of their potential. Parents anticipate protecting their children from danger whenever possible, but sometimes serious danger threatens, whether it is manmade, such as a school shooting or domestic violence, or natural, such as a flood or earthquake. And when a danger is life-threatening or poses a threat of serious injury, it becomes a potentially traumatic event for children.

By understanding how children experience traumatic events and how these children express their lingering distress over the experience, parents, physicians, communities, and schools can respond to their children and help them through this challenging time. The goal is to restore balance to these children's lives and the lives of their families.

HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

How children experience traumatic events and how they express their lingering distress depends, in large part, on the children's age and level of development.

Preschool and young school-age children exposed to a traumatic event may experience a feeling of helplessness, uncertainty about whether there is continued danger, a general fear that extends beyond the traumatic event and into other aspects of their lives, and difficulty describing in words what is bothering them or what they are experiencing emotionally.

This feeling of helplessness and anxiety is often expressed as a loss of previously acquired developmental skills. Children who experience traumatic events might not be able to fall asleep on their own or might not be able to separate from parents at school. Children who might have ventured out to play in the yard prior to a traumatic event now might not be willing to play in the absence of a family member. Often, children lose some speech and toileting skills, or their sleep is disturbed by nightmares, night terrors, or fear of going to sleep. In many cases, children may engage in traumatic play—a repetitive and less imaginative form of play that may represent children's continued focus on the traumatic event or an attempt to change a negative outcome of a traumatic event.

For school-age children, a traumatic experience may elicit feelings of persistent concern over their own safety and the safety of others in their school or family. These children may be preoccupied with their own actions during the event. Often they experience guilt or shame over what they did or did not do during a traumatic event. School-age children might engage in constant retelling of the traumatic event, or they may describe being overwhelmed by their feelings of fear or sadness.

A traumatic experience may compromise the developmental tasks of school-age children as well. Children of this age may display sleep disturbances, which might include difficulty falling asleep, fear of sleeping alone, or frequent nightmares. Teachers often comment that these children are having greater difficulties concentrating and learning at school. Children of this age, following a traumatic event, may complain of headaches and stomach aches without obvious cause, and some children engage in unusually reckless or aggressive behavior.



Adolescents exposed to a traumatic event feel self-conscious about their emotional responses to the event. Feelings of fear, vulnerability, and concern over being labeled “abnormal” or different from their peers may cause adolescents to withdraw from family and friends. Adolescents often experience feelings of shame and guilt about the traumatic event and may express fantasies about revenge and retribution. A traumatic event for adolescents may foster a radical shift in the way these children think about the world. Some adolescents engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors.

Some adolescents engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors.

HOW TO HELP

The involvement of family, physicians, school, and community is critical in supporting children through the emotional and physical challenges they face after exposure to a traumatic event.

For young children, parents can offer invaluable support, by providing comfort, rest, and an opportunity to play or draw. Parents can be available to provide reassurance that the traumatic event is over and that the children are safe. It is helpful for parents, family, and teachers to help children verbalize their feelings so that they don't feel alone with their emotions. Providing consistent caretaking by ensuring that children are picked up from school at the anticipated time and by informing children of parents' whereabouts can provide a sense of security for children who have recently experienced a traumatic event. Parents, family, caregivers, and teachers may need to tolerate regression in developmental tasks for a period of time following a traumatic event.

Older children will also need encouragement to express fears, sadness, and anger in the supportive environment of the family. These school-age children may need to be encouraged to discuss their worries with family members. It is important to acknowledge the normality of their feelings and to correct any distortions of the traumatic events that they express. Parents can be invaluable in supporting their children in reporting to teachers when their thoughts and feelings are getting in the way of their concentrating and learning.

For adolescents who have experienced a traumatic event, the family can encourage discussion of the event and feelings about it and expectations of what could have been done to prevent the event. Parents can discuss the expectable strain on relationships with family and peers, and offer support in these challenges. It may be important to help adolescents understand “acting out” behavior as an effort to voice anger about traumatic events. It may also be important to discuss thoughts of revenge following an act of violence, address realistic consequences of actions, and help formulate constructive alternatives that lessen the sense of helplessness the adolescents may be experiencing.

When children experience a traumatic event, the entire family is affected. Often, family members have different experiences around the event and different emotional responses to the traumatic event. Recognizing each others' experience of the event, and helping each other cope with possible feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, or even guilt in not being able to protect children from a traumatic experience, is an important component of a family's emotional recovery.



COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

Behavioral Health Services

Resources and Contact Information

Crisis Support Services	
BHSD Suicide and Crisis Line	855-278-4204
Crisis Support via Text	Text RENEW to 741741
Mobile Crisis Response	
<i>MCRT Adults BHSD</i>	800-704-0900
<i>MRSS Children and Youth @ Uplift Family Services</i>	408-379-9085
California Youth Crisis	800-843-5200
Kaiser Permanente Crisis	408-972-3095
To Access Behavioral Health Services, Call:	
BHSD Call Center	800-704-0900
BHSD Gateway Call Center for Substance Use Treatment Services	800-488-9919
Youth Substance Use Treatment Services (Mon-Fri 9AM – 6PM)	408-272-6518
Youth Substance Use Treatment Services (Afterhours)	800-488-9919
Additional Resources	
Disaster Distress Helpline	1-800-985-5990
Centre for Living with Dying	408-243-0222
Victim Services Unit	408-295-2656
Family Assistance Center Hotline	408-209-8356
Red Cross	408-577-1000





For Teens: Coping after Mass Violence

Mass violence incidents, where several people are injured and killed, affect everyone in the community. Coping with mass violence can be very stressful. You or your friends might have been physically injured; you may have been worried about the safety of family and friends, or lost a loved one. You may have been interviewed by the police. It can be difficult to figure out where to begin when trying to understand what happened. Over time, most people begin to feel better and return to normal routines, but knowing about the impact of mass violence can help you take care of yourself and others. Here are some common reactions to mass violence:

Feeling afraid or unsafe:

Mass violence is shocking and can make you fear for your safety. If the people at the event or those who were killed were doing things that you often do, in places you might have been, it can contribute to your fear, anxiety, and feelings of not being safe. You may believe that feeling afraid is childish, but fear and not feeling safe are common reactions after mass violence. Know that people in the community, including first responders, school staff, parents, and other caring adults are working to improve your safety and the safety of your community. As a teen, you can have an important voice in these efforts, too. For example, you can advocate for measures that you believe will make you and your community safer, or lend your voice to existing groups that have similar goals.

Having trouble getting back to your normal routines and feelings:

After mass violence, many teens will experience some of these reactions even if they aren't talking about them:

- Not being able to fall or stay asleep, not getting restful sleep, having nightmares
- Having trouble concentrating and paying attention at school or work, not getting anything done, feeling in a fog or dazed
- Feeling sad, angry, confused, or afraid that the mass violence will happen again
- Feeling isolated, or numb, like friends and family don't understand, or feeling distant from them
- Being unable to get rid of thoughts, images, or visions of the mass violence event
- Not caring about things that used to matter or were important
- Experiencing headaches, stomachaches, a racing heart, or a change in appetite
- Having sights, sounds, people, places, or other things remind you of the violence
- Feeling jumpy, irritable, or on guard for danger all or nearly all of the time

If you or someone you know lost a loved one, you may experience additional grief reactions.
Each person grieves differently, and there is no one "correct" way of grieving.

Worrying about family and loved ones:

As a teen, you are becoming more independent and developing your own values and interests. After mass violence, you may find yourself worrying about your family in new ways, or your worries may have intensified. For example, you may suddenly be much more aware of the impact of these events on elderly relatives or younger siblings and be more protective or concerned for their well-being. If you sense that your parents or caregivers are very distressed about what happened, you might not talk to them about your own feelings because you do not want to further upset them. It can be very helpful to identify a trusted adult to talk to about your thoughts, feelings, and reactions related to the mass violence so that you are not alone with your experiences.

**Making everyday issues worse:**

Teens face many challenges, like adjusting to middle or high school, meeting academic expectations, balancing athletics or other activities or job responsibilities, planning for college, dealing with peer pressure, or managing problems at home or in your personal life. You may think that your problems are small compared to mass violence. However, going through this experience can magnify the daily issues that you were already dealing with, and make them feel much worse than before. This may be especially true if you experienced a trauma prior to the mass violence, if you had depression or anxiety in the past, or if you are currently involved in counseling services.

Impacting identity issues:

As a teen, you may be learning more about yourself and what it means to identify with a sexual orientation, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, or political affiliation. If the mass violence targeted a group that you identify with, this may cause you to have especially strong emotions. You may feel a heightened level of threat, fear, or lack of safety. This also may increase your sense of feeling isolated or cut off from your peers, family, or wider community. In many cases, communities respond to mass violence by coming together to support those involved and who died, as well as each other. Hopefully this will provide you with a sense of support, acceptance, and safety as you explore your identity.

Searching for meaning:

It is difficult to understand why a person would intentionally hurt and kill others. This can challenge your trust in other people, your religious beliefs, or the ways you think about or view the world. Searching for meaning in the face of hate is extremely challenging. Reading and talking to friends, family members, teachers, and faith leaders can help you formulate your own ideas about why terrible things happen.

Taking Care of Yourself

Limit Media and Social Media Exposure:

After mass violence, media and social media coverage is constant. You may be tempted to stay glued to your phone, but this can cause even more distress. Try to disconnect from the news and social media at least for several hours every day. If watching TV or being on your phone helps you to cope, turn on a movie, watch a channel that doesn't have news alerts, or play a game.

Practice Healthy Habits:

This is a good time to establish a daily schedule that includes eating regular, healthy meals and snacks, exercising, and trying to get as close to a full night of sleep as possible. Turning off electronics at night will help you accomplish this.

Have Fun:

It's okay to disengage from tragedy. Give yourself permission to have fun. Consider doing something you really enjoy every day such as going for a walk, writing/journaling, creating art, listening to music, being with friends, spending time with your pets, or engaging in other relaxing activities.

Connect with Others:

Spend time with your family, friends, and other people who make you feel more relaxed. Don't cut yourself off from loved ones. Find a way to help others through volunteering, tutoring, or other community activities. Finding ways to connect with others often leads to feeling better. If you are worried about how a peer is coping, check in with them, and let a trusted adult know.

Seek help:

If you want to talk to someone, ask your parent or other caring adult, school counselor or nurse, or primary care provider for help. Your community may have drop-in centers specifically for this purpose. Most of these issues resolve with time, but if they continue, don't hesitate to seek additional or specialized counseling services.

Guiding Adults in Talking to Children About Death and Attending Services

Beliefs and attitudes about death, funerals, and expressions of grief are strongly influenced by a family's culture, religion, spirituality, and rituals related to mourning. Families need their own traditions, practices, and rituals so they can support each other, manage the wide range of emotional responses family members will have, face their adversities, find meaning for themselves, and honor the loved one. Navigating questions about death, funerals, and memorials can be challenging, but manageable. These sample questions and answers may help guide discussions.

What kinds of grief reactions will my children and I have?

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each member of your family will react differently. Some may not cry, while others might cry a lot.

There is no "normal" length of time for grieving. Family members and friends should try to understand that each person is going through his or her own course of grief. Everyone needs extra time to mourn.

The grief of young children can be just as strong as that of any other family member. Yet you may see them grieve just a short time and then start playing. Some cannot share their feelings in words, but show their grief through play. Parents can expect that their children's behavior may be worse at times.

Are there differences in reactions among children who were at the mass violence event and those children in the wider community?

Children at the mass violence event may not show or speak of their grief. They may seem to be more focused on what they saw or heard that day than on how much they miss their friends. It is normal for children to tell (or act out) the same stories over and over or to repeatedly ask the same questions. School-aged children faced with the death of friends or loved ones, often feel guilty or ashamed in the mistaken belief that somehow they could have prevented the death. If children continue to focus on the event over the next few weeks, parents should call back for community resources to help their family.

How well do children understand the idea of death?

Children's understanding of death depends on the age of the child, his or her prior experience with death, and the family's religious beliefs and cultural values.

Pre-school children	May not understand that death is permanent. They may believe that if they wish it, the person could return. To help children understand the physical reality of a person's death, parents can use concrete facts—that he or she is no longer breathing or moving, is not hungry or thirsty, is not scared or having feelings of discomfort or pain.
School-age children	May understand the physical reality of death, but still may have times that they imagine seeing the person again (but not tell anyone). They may still expect to see them again at school.

Parents of both pre-school and school-age children should say that while the person has died, we can still love them and keep them in our hearts and thoughts.

How do I talk to my child about death?

- Be truthful with your child
- Give short, simple, honest, and age-appropriate answers to their questions
- Listen carefully to their feelings without judgment (there are no “wrong” feelings)
- Be ready to discuss the same things or answer the same questions over again
- Do not be afraid to say that you don’t know the answer to a question
- Ask what he or she wants to know and give answers that fit those questions
- Let your child know that he or she can come to talk to you at anytime

What are some issues about having my child and family attend services?

Funerals help the family and community say goodbye. They can help children understand the physical reality of death: that the person who died cannot come back. Being at a funeral with grieving family and friends may help a child express his or her grief. While attending services can be distressing, it may be harder on children to be left out of something so important to the family.

Parents/caregivers should give children a choice to attend or not to attend the service. They may encourage, but not pressure them. Before asking the child to choose, describe what will occur.

- Tell children what they might see or hear if they attend, including the type of service, what will occur, and how people will behave (i.e., adults may be crying, a special area for the family may be set aside, there may be a viewing of the loved one—which they don’t have to see).
- Tell children about alternative arrangements to attending, for example, that they can stay with a neighbor or friend of the family.
- If they don’t attend, offer to say something or read something on their behalf, and explain that they can participate in memorial activities at a later time, including creating their own memorial.

If your children decide to attend a service, before you go, review what they can expect will happen.

- Talk to your children not only about what to expect, but also about how you may react. Assure them that this is your way of being sad today and that you are okay.
- Consider whether you will be able to accompany and support your child or whether you need to have another family member or friend there to support him or her.
- Prepare the companion to both comfort your child and take him or her out of the setting for breaks from the service as needed, so that you can fully attend to your own feelings.
- Before the event, review what your children can expect will happen and what they need to do.

Services are emotionally intense. Consider carefully how many you and your child should attend. When grieving multiple losses, there may be multiple services. If the community or school plans a memorial service to celebrate the lives of all of the children and adults who died, attending such a service may be a better alternative for both parents and children than attending multiple funerals.

If the family chooses not to attend services they can engage in a variety of alternative rituals:

- Light candles at home or in a public place to remember those who died.
- Create a ceremony consistent with their culture and tradition.
- Say prayers at home or in their places of worship.
- Write notes or make cards for the surviving family members.
- Share with each other feelings and memories of those who are gone.

How can I help my child after a funeral or memorial?

Talk to your children about their feelings and answer their questions. They may need some help in naming their feelings. They may ask you about your reactions and those of other people that were there. Reassure them that people showing intense emotions are OK, that they were showing how much they miss the person.

- Ask children whether they would like to talk with someone else about the service, such as a teacher or clergy member. Offer to join your child if he or she would like.
- After the funeral, be prepared to give more time and support to your children, such as extra time at bedtime. Again, be prepared for repeated questions about the event.

Take care of your child by taking care of yourself during this time. Parents should have someone they can talk to about their own feelings.

- Be aware that children may worry that something bad will happen to family members or friends and may have trouble separating from them. When separating, tell children where you are going and when you will return, so they know what to expect.

Is it OK to celebrate the holidays while my community is grieving?

Tell your child that the holiday may not feel as it usually does, but that's OK. Children benefit from having routines and structure. Celebrating the holidays is one of those routines. Think of a way to add an activity that honors those who are gone, for example, lighting a candle.

Above all, remember that talking with children who are grieving is emotionally challenging, so please practice good Self Care!



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 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 reactions and difficulties.

Children's and teen's reactions to the shooting are strongly influenced by how parents, relatives, teachers, and other caregivers respond to the event. They often turn to these adults for information, comfort, and help. There are many reactions that are common after mass violence. These generally diminish with time, but knowing about them can help you to be supportive, both of yourself and your 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:
 - Increase in activity level
 - Decrease in concentration and attention
 - Increase in irritability and anger
 - Sadness, grief, and/or withdrawal
 - Radical changes in attitudes and expectations for the future
 - Increases or decreases in sleep and appetite
 - Engaging in harmful habits like drinking, using drugs, or doing things that are harmful to self or others
 - 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)

Things I Can Do for Myself

- **Take care of yourself.** Do your best to drink plenty of water, eat regularly, and get enough sleep and exercise.
- **Help each other.** Take time with other adult relatives, friends, or members of the community to talk or support each other.
- **Put off major decisions.** Avoid making any unnecessary life-altering decisions during this time.
- **Give yourself a break.** Take time to rest and do things that you like to do.

Things I Can Do for My Child

- **Spend time talking with your children.** Let them know that they are welcome to ask questions and express their concerns and feelings. You should remain open to answering new questions and providing helpful information and support. You might not know all the answers and it is OK to say that. At the same time, don't push them to talk if they don't want to. Let them know you are available when they are ready.
- **Find time to have these conversations.** Use time such as when you eat together or sit together in the evening to talk about what is happening in the family as well as in the community. Try not to have these conversations close to bedtime, as this is the time for resting.
- **Promote your children's self-care.** Help children by encouraging them to drink enough water, eat regularly, and get enough rest and exercise. Let them know it is OK to take a break from talking with others about the recent attacks or from participating in any of the memorial events.
- **Help children feel safe.** Talk with children about their concerns over safety and discuss changes that are occurring in the community to promote safety. Encourage your child to voice their concerns to you or to teachers at school.
- **Maintain expectations or "rules."** Stick with family rules, such as curfews, checking in with you while with friends, and keeping up with homework and chores. On a time-limited basis, keep a closer watch on where teens are going and what they are planning to do to monitor how they are doing. Assure them that the extra check-in is temporary, just until things stabilize.
- **Address acting out behaviors.** Help children/teens understand that "acting out" behaviors are a dangerous way to express strong feelings over what happened. Examples of "acting out" include intentionally cutting oneself, driving recklessly, engaging in unprotected sex, and abusing drugs or alcohol. You can say something like, "Many children and adults feel out of control and angry right now. They might even think drinking or taking drugs will help somehow. It's very normal to feel that way - but it's not a good idea to act on it." Talk with children about other ways of coping with these feelings (distraction, exercise, writing in a journal, spending time with others).
- **Limit media exposure.** Protect your child from too much media coverage about the attacks, including on the Internet, radio, television, or other technologies (e.g., texting, Facebook, Twitter). Explain to them that media coverage and social media technologies can trigger fears of the attacks happening again and also spread rumors. Let them know they can distract themselves with another activity or that they can talk to you about how they are feeling.

- **Be patient.** Children may be more distracted and need added help with chores or homework once school is in session.
- **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 and blame themselves, thinking they could have done more. You’re not at fault. There was nothing more you could have done.”
- **Manage reminders.** Help children identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings) and to clarify the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it. When children experience a reminder, they can say to themselves, “I am upset because I am reminded of the shooting because the potato chip bag popped. But now there is no shooting and I am safe.” Some reminders may be related to the loss of friends and/or family (photos of the person, music listened to together, locations of time spent together). Help your child cope with these loss reminders and provide them extra comfort during these times.
- **Monitor changes in relationships.** Explain to children that strains on relationships are expectable. Emphasize that everyone needs family and friends for support during this time. Spend more time talking as a family about how everyone is doing. Encourage tolerance for how your family and friends may be recovering or feeling differently. Accept responsibility for your own feelings, by saying “I want to apologize for being irritable with you yesterday. I was having a bad day.”
- **Address radical changes in attitudes and expectations for the future.** Explain to children that changes in people’s attitudes are common and tend to be temporary after a tragedy like this. These feelings can include feeling scared, angry, and sometimes revengeful. Find other ways to make them feel more in control and talk about their feelings.
- **Get adults in your children’s life involved.** If there has been a serious injury, death in the family, death of a close friend, or if your child is having difficulties, let your child’s teacher or other caring adults know so that they can be of help.
- **Empower your child to get involved in their medical care.** For children or teens with injuries and long-term medical needs, encourage them to participate in medical discussions and decisions as much as possible. Have them ask their own questions and give opinions about different procedures. Teens are especially concerned about their physical appearance, fitting in, and their privacy. Talk with them about their concerns, problem-solve ways to address them, and respect their privacy.
- **Seek professional help.** If teens have continued difficulties for a couple of months after the attacks, parents should consult a trusted helper—a doctor or mental health professional.



Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) is part of the Uniformed Services University's Department of Psychiatry, located in Bethesda, Maryland, and a partnering center of the Defense Center of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Restoring a Sense of Safety in the Aftermath of a Mass Shooting: Tips for Parents and Professionals

Too often our children are exposed to violence that is both senseless and harmful. Many children, those living in close proximity to a tragic event, and those who will learn about the event through television, social media, or newspaper coverage, will be affected and upset. The timing of this tragedy — the holiday season — makes this Connecticut school shooting even more upsetting. Many children will soon be on school holidays putting additional responsibility on parents and caregivers to reassure children who may know about or ask questions around this event.

Communicate effectively with your children

A high profile event of this magnitude can result in confusion and distress among communities across the country. Distress can result in distortion about the facts of the event. Therefore, special attention should be given when communicating with children and adolescents.

- When speaking with your children, it is best to use communication that is factual, simple, clear and sensitively worded.
- Don't overwhelm young children with too much information. They might want to talk intermittently or might need concrete information to be repeated.
- Use language that is appropriate to your child's age.
- Young children sometimes exhibit "magical thinking" which might lead them to believe they are responsible for what happened.
- Children may have ideas or beliefs that are difficult to know unless you *ask them*.
- Adults can encourage children to talk, but should respect their wishes when they may not want to.
- Ensure that your children are not exposed to media reports about the event that are repetitive, confusing, or frightening.

Physical safety and security always take priority

It is difficult to predict children's reactions to learning about these types of events and whether children's immediate reactions will lead to sustained psychological problems.

- Common posttraumatic responses in children include:

nightmares or fears related to the trauma, avoidance of reminders of the trauma, and repetitive play that mimics the trauma.

- While symptoms are often transient, they should be clinically treated if they persist. If you have questions contact your child's health care or behavioral health care provider to seek advice or guidance.
- Some children may act out as a reaction. Talk to your child about what is troubling them and do not punish or reprimand them.

Answers to some common questions

Below are some common questions and answers to help guide caregivers addressing a confusing or senseless act of mass violence with children and adolescents:

Why do these things happen?

Children, like adults, often want to know the motives of people responsible for these horrible events. Past events have resulted from many causes including mental illness, rage, extreme political or religious beliefs, and frank hatred. Unfortunately, we usually can't be sure what led a specific individual acting in such a way. It does not help children to have them fear groups of people who fall into any specific demographic categories. Doing so only leads to discrimination, stigma, and victimization of people who also are struggling to cope with these events. More importantly, help your children understand that adults, including government authorities work hard to identify and stop dangerous events before they even happen.

Will this happen again and how do I keep my children safe?

Unfortunately, violent events are likely to occur in the future. It is important to remember that despite our awareness, random violence occurs rarely and does not occur in most neighborhoods. Remember that parents and professionals strive to keep our children safe yet allow them the space they need to grow and develop. Use the following guidelines:

- know your children's whereabouts, who they are with and when they are to return home

- set clear and consistent curfews
- have a clear method of communication in normal and emergency situations (e.g. cell phone)
- educate them about places or situations that are more likely to put them in danger and teach them to avoid high-risk exposures
- monitor federal and local advise about risks that might surface
- be vigilant about safety in your community
- strive to keep open communication with children and adolescents

How does one plan for this type of emergency?

Discuss hypothetical emergency situations with your children and calmly talk with them about what they can do to keep themselves safe when danger presents itself. Instruct them to trust and seek help from police and other authorities who are likely to be on the scene quickly. Always encourage your children to say something when they see something suspicious. Establishing a communication plan for locating family members can help to reduce anxiety. Parents should know where their children are and children should tell parents when they have changed their location.

Is my child okay?

Children will show a wide variety of reactions. There is no “normal” reaction to stressful events. Some reactions include tearfulness, separation or bedtime anxiety, or regression in behaviors. More severe reactions may include reliving the trauma through dreams, emotional numbness, increased startle responses, withdrawal or physical symptoms like racing heartbeat, nausea or change in appetite.

These types of events, while tragic, can sometimes lead to positive opportunities. They become opportunities to open, or reopen, channels of communication among family members. They may provide us opportunities to appreciate each other more and to express our love for one another. They may provide opportunities for families to better plan how they will cope with future difficult times or topics. It is important to focus on what might positively emerge from these tragic events while we also acknowledge tragic losses.

Online Resources

If you have any questions about your child’s health or response to a traumatic event you can seek professional advice from a community primary care or behavioral care provider or review additional resources at the following sites:

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
 National Child Traumatic Stress Network
 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
 American Academy of Pediatrics
 American Psychiatric Association
 American Psychological Association
 American Red Cross

www.cstsonline.org
www.ncstn.org
www.aacap.org
www.aap.org
www.psych.org
www.apa.org
www.redcross.org



Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
 Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
 3401 Jones Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-4799
 Tel: 301-295-2470 | Fax: 301-319-6965
www.usuhs.mil/csts | www.CSTSonline.org

A partnering center of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury

Talking to Children about the Shooting

The recent shooting has evoked many emotions—sadness, grief, helplessness, anxiety, and anger. Children who are struggling with their thoughts and feelings about the stories and images of the shooting may turn to trusted adults for help and guidance.

- **Start the conversation.** Talk about the shooting with your child. Not talking about it can make the event even more threatening in your child's mind. Silence suggests that what has occurred is too horrible even to speak about or that you do not know what has happened. With social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, text messages, newsbreaks on favorite radio and TV stations, and others), it is highly unlikely that children and teenagers have not heard about this. Chances are your child has heard about it, too.
- **What does your child already know?** Start by asking what your child/teen already has heard about the events from the media and from friends. Listen carefully; try to figure out what he or she knows or believes. As your child explains, listen for misinformation, misconceptions, and underlying fears or concerns. Understand that this information will change as more facts about the shooting are known.
- **Gently correct inaccurate information.** If your child/teen has inaccurate information or misconceptions, take time to provide the correct information in simple, clear, age-appropriate language.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions, and answer those questions directly.** Your child/teen may have some difficult questions about the incident. For example, she may ask if it is possible that it could happen at your workplace; she is probably really asking whether it is "likely." The concern about re-occurrence will be an issue for caregivers and children/teens alike. While it is important to discuss the likelihood of this risk, she is also asking if she is safe. This may be a time to review plans your family has for keeping safe in the event of any crisis situation. Do give any information you have on the help and support the victims and their families are receiving. Like adults, children/teens are better able to cope with a difficult situation when they have the facts about it. Having question-and-answer talks gives your child ongoing support as he or she begins to cope with the range of emotions stirred up by this tragedy.
- **Limit media exposure.** Limit your child's exposure to media images and sounds of the shooting, and *do not allow your very young children to see or hear any TV/radio shooting-related messages.* Even if they appear to be engrossed in play, children often are aware of what you are watching on TV or listening to on the radio. What may not be upsetting to an adult may be very upsetting and confusing for a child. Limit your own exposure as well. Adults may become more distressed with nonstop exposure to media coverage of this shooting.
- **Common reactions.** Children/Teens may have reactions to this tragedy. In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, they may have more problems paying attention and concentrating.

They may become more irritable or defiant. Children and even teens may have trouble separating from caregivers, wanting to stay at home or close by them. It's common for young people to feel anxious about what has happened, what may happen in the future, and how it will impact their lives. Children/Teens may think about this event, even when they try not to. Their sleep and appetite routines may change. In general, you should see these reactions lessen within a few weeks.

- **Be a positive role model.** Consider sharing your feelings about the events with your child/teen, but at a level they can understand. You may express sadness and empathy for the victims and their families. You may share some worry, but it is important to also share ideas for coping with difficult situations like this tragedy. When you speak of the quick response by law enforcement and medical personnel to help the victims (and the heroic or generous efforts of ordinary citizens), you help your child/teen see that there can be good, even in the mist of such a horrific event.
- **Be patient.** In times of stress, children/teens may have trouble with their behavior, concentration, and attention. While they may not openly ask for your guidance or support, they will want it. Adolescents who are seeking increased independence may have difficulty expressing their needs. Both children and teens will need a little extra patience, care, and love. (Be patient with yourself, too!).
- **Extra help.** Should reactions continue or at any point interfere with your children's/teens' abilities to function or if you are worried, contact local mental health professionals who have expertise in trauma. Contact your family physician, pediatrician, or state mental health associations for referrals to such experts.

AFTER A CRISIS: HOW YOUNG CHILDREN HEAL

Young children, toddlers, and preschoolers know when bad things happen, and they remember what they have been through. After a scary event, we often see changes in their behavior. They may cry more, become clingy and not want us to leave, have temper tantrums, hit others, have problems sleeping, become afraid of things that didn't bother them before, and lose skills they previously mastered. Changes like these are a sign that they need help. Here are some ways you can help them.

S SAFETY FIRST—YOUR YOUNG CHILD FEELS SAFE WHEN YOU

- ☐ Hold your child or let them stay close to you.
- ☐ Tell your child you will take care of them when things are scary or difficult. With children who are learning to talk, use simple words, like saying "Daddy's here."
- ☐ Keep them away from frightening TV images and scary conversations.
- ☐ Do familiar things, like singing a song you both like or telling a story.
- ☐ Let them know what will happen next (to the degree that you know).
- ☐ Have a predictable routine, at least for bedtime: a story, a prayer, cuddle time.
- ☐ Leave them with familiar people when you have to be away.
- ☐ Tell them where you are going and when you will come back.

A ALLOW EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

- ☐ Young children often "behave badly" when they are worried or scared. Children can "act out" as a way of asking for help. Remember! Difficult feelings = Difficult behavior.
- ☐ Help your child name how they feel: "scared," "happy," "angry," "sad." Tell them it's OK to feel that way.
- ☐ Show your child the right way to behave, like saying "It's OK to be angry but it's not OK to hit me."
- ☐ Help your child express anger in ways that won't hurt, using words, play, or drawings.
- ☐ Talk about the things that are going well to help you and your child feel good.

F FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

- ☐ Different children need different things. Some children need to run around, others need to be held.
- ☐ Listen to your child and watch their behavior to figure out what they need.

E ENABLE YOUR CHILD TO TELL THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED DURING & AFTER

- ☐ Having a story helps your child make sense of what happened and cope better with it.
- ☐ Children use play to tell their story. For example, they may make popping sounds to show what they experienced. They may hide in the closest to show what it was like to shelter-in-place.
- ☐ Join your child in showing and telling not only what happened, step by step, but also how you both felt.
- ☐ As you tell the story, follow your child's lead. When the story is difficult, your young child may need breaks: running around, being held, playing something else. This is OK. They will come back to the story when they are ready.
- ☐ It can be hard to watch your children's play or listen to their stories of what happened. Get support if it is too hard for you to listen without becoming upset.

T TIES—RECONNECT WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE, COMMUNITY, CULTURE & RITUALS

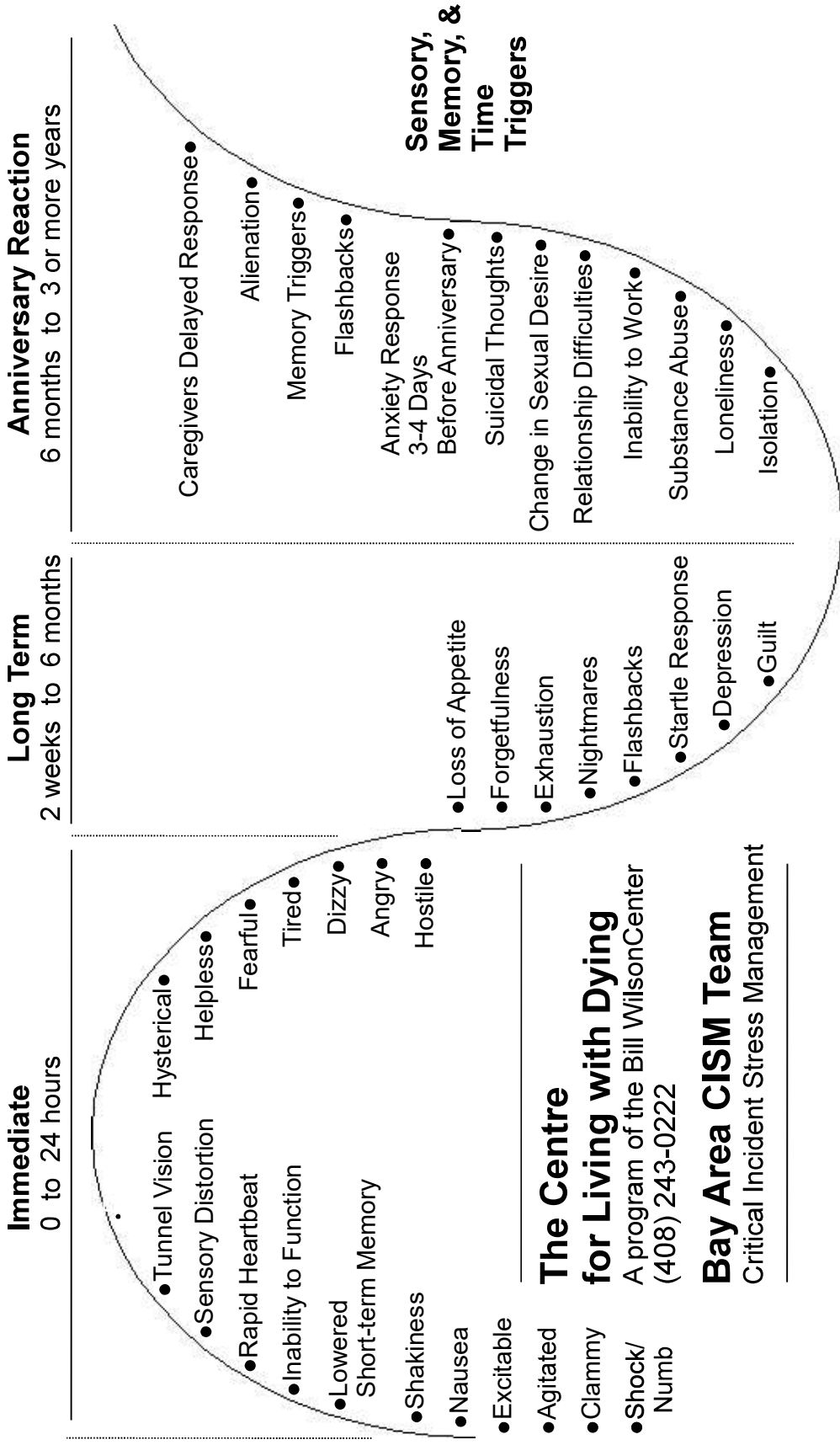
- ☐ Simple things like a familiar bedtime story, a song, a prayer, or family traditions remind you and your child of your way of life and offer hope.
- ☐ If you belong to a group, like a church, try to find ways of reconnecting with them.
- ☐ You can help your child best when you take care of yourself. Get support from others when you need it.

Y YOUR CHILD NEEDS YOU

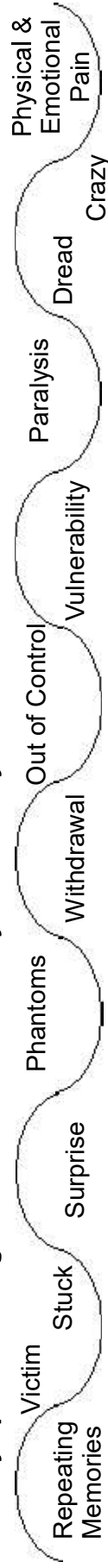
- ☐ Reassure your child that you will be together.
- ☐ It is common for children to be clingy and worried about being away from you.
- ☐ Just being with your child, even when you can't fix things, helps your child.
- ☐ If you need to leave your child, let them know for how long and when you are coming back. If possible, leave something that belongs to you, or a picture that your child can have.

Reactions in the Aftermath of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is any event that causes unusually strong reactions in the responding personnel or survivors. These reactions/responses can occur immediately or in a delayed fashion.

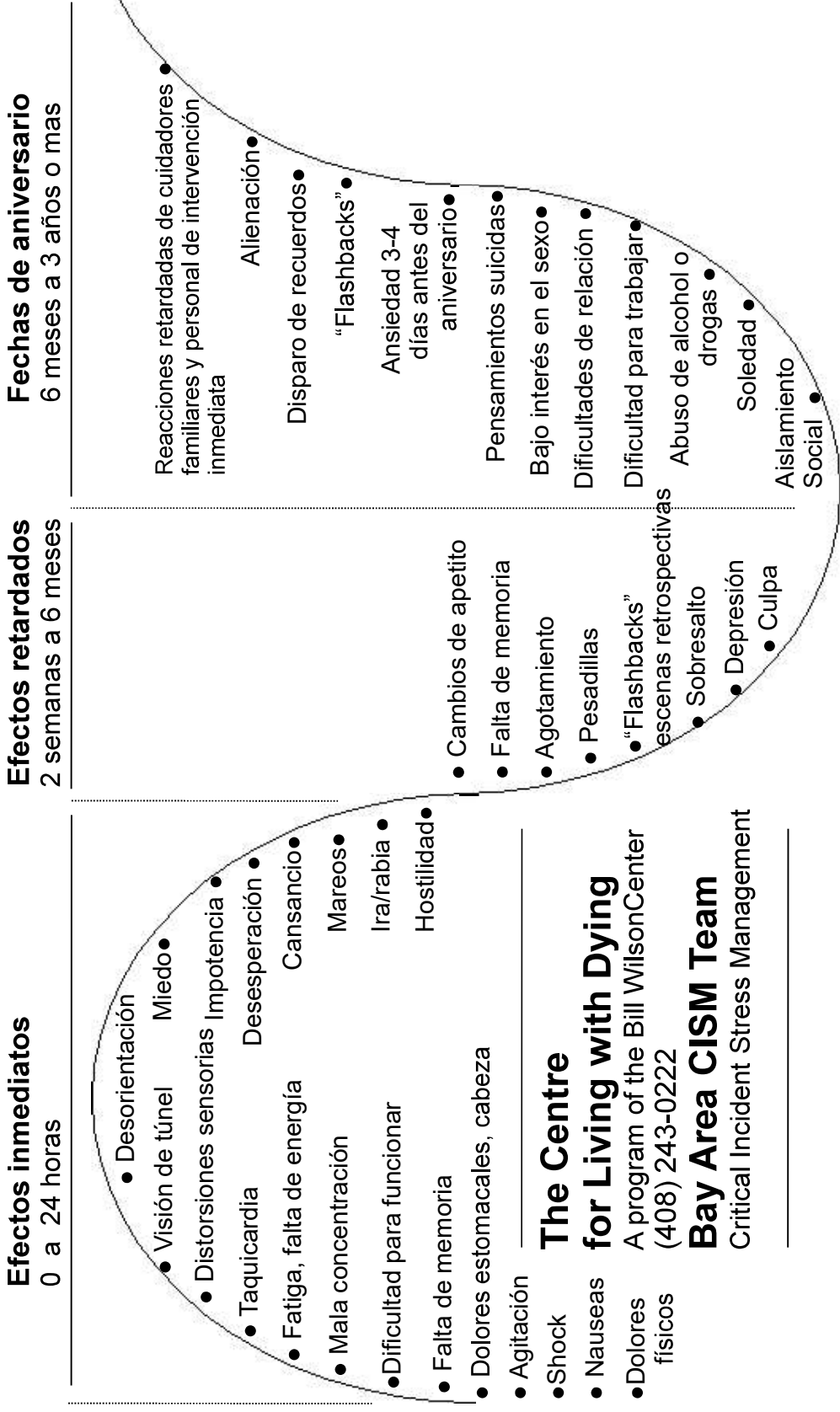


These symptoms, feelings, reactions or events may occur at any time:

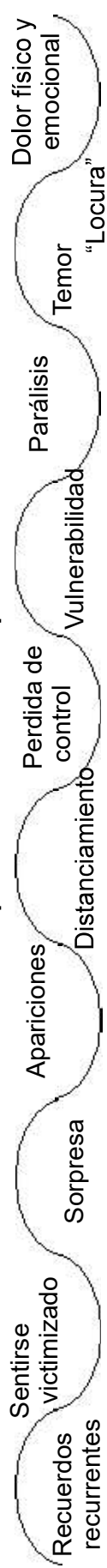


Repercusiones de un Incidente Crítico

Los incidentes críticos son esos eventos que causan una reacción emocional fuerte. Estas reacciones negativas de estrés son comunes y a veces se presentan durante o inmediatamente después de un evento traumático.



Estos síntomas, sensaciones, reacciones, o eventos pueden ocurrir en cualquier momento:



Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

After an important person dies, children grieve in different ways. When the death was sudden or frightening, some children develop traumatic grief responses, making it hard for them to cope with their grief. Below are ways to recognize and help your child with traumatic grief.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT:	YOU CAN HELP ME WHEN YOU:
1. My feelings about the death are confusing. Sometimes I feel okay, and other times I feel sad, scared, or just empty or numb. It's really hard to make the scary and sad feelings go away.	1. Talk about your feelings and encourage me to talk about mine as long as I feel comfortable.
2. Sometimes my upset feelings come out as bad behavior.	2. Help me do things to feel calm, get back to my routine, and have fun again. Are patient until I feel O.K.
3. I have trouble concentrating, paying attention, and sleeping sometimes, because what happened is on my mind.	3. Understand that thoughts about what happened get stuck in my mind. Help me relax at bedtime by reading stories or listening to music and reminding me that you keep me safe.
4. I might have physical reactions like stomach aches, headaches, feeling my heart pounding, and breathing too fast.	4. Help me do things that make me feel calm, take my mind off things, or slow down my breathing.
5. Sometimes I wonder if the death was my fault.	5. Reassure me that it was not my fault.
6. I sometimes think the same thing will happen to me or other people I love.	6. Remind me about the things we do to stay safe and take care of ourselves. Help me remember all the people who take care of me.
7. I keep thinking about what happened over and over in my head.	7. Listen to what is on my mind. Tell me honestly what happened, using words I can understand. Do not let me see it on TV or other media if the story is in the news.
8. Sometimes I don't like to think or talk about the person who died, because it's too hard. I may not tell you everything because I don't want to upset you.	8. Don't make me talk about what happened. Don't get mad if I don't want to talk it or about the person.
9. I don't like to go to some places or do some things that remind me of the person who died, or of how my life has changed since the person died, because I get upset.	9. Don't make me go places if it still makes me too upset or scared.
10. I have trouble remembering good things about the person because I remember other things that make me too mad, sad, or scared, and they get in the way.	10. Understand that I am still too scared and sad to think about the happy times right now. Help me to feel better.

If any of these problems get in the way of your child having fun, going to school, being with friends, or doing other activities, you can make an appointment with your child to see a mental health professional with expertise in treating traumatized children.

Tip Sheet for Youth Talking to Journalists about the Shooting

Following a shooting, youth may be asked by journalists to open up and discuss their thoughts or emotional reactions to the traumatic event. Journalists will ask youth to talk about their reactions so that people can understand the emotional impact these events have on young people. Youth may find that talking to journalists can help themselves and others feel more in control during periods of stress and crisis. Some may believe talking to journalists is a civic duty that promotes accurate information, educates the public, and helps the community (e.g., change community policies, or raise awareness about prevention), while others may find media attention intrusive, embarrassing, or overwhelming.

Sometimes when people are at their most vulnerable state, (for example, after witnessing, learning about or surviving a traumatic event) they might be asked to share their stories with others. This can occur with a journalist or during an online forum. Talking to a journalist or the media is an important decision. Later, they might wish they could take back what they said or do things differently. It is important to remember that talking to a journalist or the media is an important decision. Also, it is perfectly acceptable to make the choice to protect one's privacy and thoughts during emotionally difficult times. Each individual can decide whether to talk to a journalist.

You and Your Child Have the Right to:

- ☐ Choose whether or not to talk to a reporter.
- ☐ Ask the journalist what questions s/he will ask you *before* agreeing to an interview.
- ☐ Talk to one journalist and turn down another.
- ☐ Stop the interview at any point.
- ☐ Refuse to answer a question.
- ☐ Say no to any topic you don't wish to discuss, without justifying anything.
- ☐ Correct an interviewer if his/her assumption about the situation is wrong.
- ☐ Postpone talking to a journalist—say “Sorry, not now, but maybe in the future.”
- ☐ Be treated with respect.
- ☐ Ask to have a friend or parent with you
- ☐ Refuse to be filmed or photographed, even if you have agreed to an interview.
- ☐ Ask the reporter to read back your quotes to make sure they are accurate.

SIGNS OF A GOOD REPORTER

- Conveys dignity and respect.
- Asks permission.
- Discusses the rules of engagement and explains:
 - Why you have been approached.
 - That everything you say will not be used.
 - How long you might talk.
 - Limits of confidentiality.
- Accepts when you politely decline to answer a question.
- Takes accurate notes and concentrates on what you are saying.
- Thanks you for your input.



Grief & Mourning

The death of someone close to us throws us into a sea of chaotic feelings. Sometimes, the waves of emotions seem powerful enough to threaten our very survival; sometimes they feel relentless and never-ending; sometimes they quiet down only to arise months or even years later when we least expect them.

Grief is not something we ever really "get over" -our loss remains a fact for a lifetime. Nothing about grief's journey is simple; there is no tidy progression of stages and its course is long and circular.

While there is no clear roadmap, there are some features common to almost everyone's experience. Some of the dimensions presented below may ebb and flow within a natural healing process. The walk down grief's road requires time, patience, attention, hard work and lots of loving care.

Grief is the natural human response to any loss, not only death. An illness, a job change, divorce and separation, unfulfilled dream, a move to a new location, or any other change can bring about a grief response. Grief is not a problem. It is a normal, healthy process of healing.

SHOCK AND SURPRISE

Even if death is expected, you may feel numb or anesthetized for several weeks afterward. Your actions may be mechanical and you may get things done (for example, handle all the funeral details) but you are not "all there". People around you may be saying "Isn't he strong?" or "She's handling this so well". The impact or reality of the death has not fully reached you. This period of shock is your psyche's way of protecting you by allowing reality in slowly. If the loss is sudden, unexpected or violent, the period of numbness may be longer.

EMOTIONAL RELEASE

As the period of shock wears off, reality can be acutely painful. As the full impact gradually dawns on you, conflict may arise about whether to show grief or not to show it. How much and for how long? You might try to keep up a good front or remain strong, even though you may feel like crying or screaming. If people are praising you for being so brave and not "falling apart", do you dare show them how you really feel? This is a time when emotional release is important and should be encouraged. Concealing painful feelings may prolong the grief process and increase physical and emotional distress. At this point, other mourners can help support your expression of grief.

LONELINESS

Sometimes, even before the funeral, the feelings of loneliness, isolation and depression begin. The funeral is the focus for realizing that your loved one is really gone. Family and friends can be helpful and consoling, but after the funeral the prevailing attitude is "it's all over". The supportive

people in your life may disappear. After the funeral you may suffer a second major loss, everyday contact with your loved one. For some this might mean no home cooked meals, coming home to an empty house, no welcome home greeting. For others it may mean no one to cook for, no one to help with household chores, no one to hold and share the small everyday moments and rituals. If your child has died, there is no one to see come home from school, no one to share your future dreams with or to see grow up. If your loved one has been sick for a long time, you no longer have hospital visits to make. Your entire routine of daily living has been shattered. You are alone, suddenly overcome by an utter sense of depression and despair. It is important at this point to have people in your life who can validate the magnitude of your loss.

PHYSICAL DISTRESS WITH ANXIETY

Questions that may come up for you: What am I going to do? What's going to happen to me? How, can I get along without her? Will I lose my friends? You may develop the same type of physical symptoms your loved one had. For example: If she had a heart attack, you may now have chest pains. Anxiety and stress may bring with it such physical symptoms as shortness of breath, insomnia, headaches, backaches or an upset stomach. During the entire grief process, you need to take especially good care of your body, you are vulnerable and may need a lot more rest. You may want to see your physician for a physical examination.

PANIC AND DISORGANIZATION

You may have trouble concentrating on anything but the loss. You may feel something is wrong with you, you may replay thoughts such as: I can't get the images out of my mind, won't they ever stop? Sometimes I think I see her. Sometimes I feel his touch. Sometimes I hear his voice. I've got to do something. I can't sleep. I can't eat. All I do is think about her. Will it ever stop hurting? Will I ever stop dreaming about her? As a bereaved person, you need to know this does not mean you are going crazy. This is a normal part of the grieving process.

GUILT

When faced with real or imagined guilt, you may begin asking questions like: What did I do wrong? What if I'd stayed awake, hadn't gone to work, kissed her, showed I loved him? These questions may indicate guilt, regrets or unfinished business, which need to be expressed. These feelings can be brought to the surface by sharing with a non-judgmental listener, in a letter or in a diary. Partial or complete interruption of the grief process at this time can cause severe depression and/or suicidal feelings.

HOSTILITY, PROJECTION AND ANGER

In conjunction with or emerging from the feelings of guilt, you may experience hostility. Maybe you are hostile to people whom you perceived contributed to your problem. Example: To the physician: Why didn't he do something? Why didn't he get there in time? Did he do everything he could? You may be experiencing anger at friends who draw away from you or seem to belittle your loss with well meaning but clumsy remarks. You may be furious with God or fate for taking away your loved one. You may also be angry with your loved one for dying and abandoning you. Anger is a very normal, human emotion and it is important to find ways to release those feelings of "What I'm going through is so unfair." "Why did it have to happen to him, he was a GOOD person?" Talking about it and physical activity both help keep anger from burning inside.

SUFFERING IN SILENCE AND DEPRESSION

This is a time when you may suffer in silence. You might feel fatigued, worn out and unable to get started in any activity. Your thought processes are involved with the loss -emptiness and loneliness but you may no longer want to talk about it. You recognize that others expect you to stop grieving. Your tears, anger, frustrations or depression are poorly tolerated by others several weeks after the funeral. Except for the initial loss, this stage is the hardest. YOU, THE BEREAVED PERSON, FEEL ALL ALONE. You may have feelings of "not wanting to go on" and then shock or guilt for having such thoughts. This is a period where you are recreating meaning in life -and it takes time.

THE GRADUAL OVERCOMING OF GRIEF

Your adjustment to a new status in life gradually occurs with working through this grief period. There can be a noticeable change as early as 4 weeks to 3 months, but often it is much longer. By the end of this phase, there is considerable brightening of mood, more activity, and the beginning of re-establishment with people.

READJUSTMENT TO REALITY

Because traditional symbols of grief, such as the black veil or clothing or arm band, are out of style, many times it is easy for others to forget you are grieving. You are beginning to restructure your life without your loved one. You may want to take a vacation, a trip or get involved in a new activity, or take up old activities you used to like. Occasionally, you may feel twinges of guilt as you begin to enjoy yourself or laugh freely again, as though you are somehow betraying the memory of your lost loved one. It is helpful to be aware of guilt feelings that get in the way of readjustment. It is also helpful to recognize that wedding anniversaries, holidays, birthdays or the anniversary date of the death may cause a temporary flood of feelings or may bring back a very short version of the grief process. This is normal and does not mean that you will be in acute pain forever.

REMEMBER...

Grief is a natural life experience we all go through in healing the reality of loss and change. Each grief journey is unique. Reaching out to others for support and being kind to one's self can enable us to survive the pain.



the Centre for Living with Dying a program of Bill Wilson Center
408.243.0222

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
<u>MT. Madonna</u>	Saul & Carlos	Saul	Saul & Carlos	Saul & Carlos	Saul
<u>GHS</u>	Carina	Adriana	Cinthya	Gia & Adriana	Maria
<u>CHS</u>	Lupe	Maddie	Priscila Gomez	Rosalva	Andreina
<u>SV</u>	Maddie	Lorenzo	Maddie	Destiny	Maddie
<u>Brownell</u>	Priscila available by phone	Carlos & Josephine	Carlos (9-12) Adriana (after 1:30)	Carlos	Gia & Adriana
<u>Glenview</u>	Josephine	Alyssa & Destiny	Andreina	Carina	Josephine
<u>Eliot</u>	Andreina	Carina	Alyssa	Josephine	Rosalva & Laura
<u>Rucker</u>	Alyssa	Andreina	Josephine	Alyssa	Carina

Uplift's Mobile Crisis number: (408)379-9085

Priscilla Garcia: (408)706-1216

Jessica Schneider: (408)846-2132



Helping your children manage distress in the aftermath of a shooting

As a parent, you may be struggling with how to talk with your children about a community shooting at a school or elsewhere. It is important to remember that children look to their parents to make them feel safe. This is true no matter what ages your children are, be they toddlers, adolescents or even young adults.

Consider the following tips for helping your children manage their distress:

Talk with your child. Talking to your children about their worries and concerns is the first step to help them feel safe and begin to cope with the events occurring around them. What you talk about and how you say it does depend on their age, but all children need to be able to know you are there listening to them.

- Start the conversation. Let them know you are interested in them and want to know how they are coping with the information.
- Find times when they are most likely to talk: such as when riding in the car, before dinner or at bedtime.
- Listen to their thoughts and point of view. Don't interrupt — allow them to express their ideas and understanding before you respond.
- Listen for misinformation or misperceptions and gently correct these. Express your own opinions and ideas without putting down theirs. Acknowledge that it is okay to disagree.
- Reinforce ideas of safety and security. If you know, share what schools and communities are doing to increase safety. Remind them you are there for them to provide safety, comfort and support.

Keep home a safe place. Children, regardless of age, often find home to be a safe haven when the world around them becomes overwhelming. During times of crisis, it is important to remember that your children may come home seeking the safe feeling they have being there. Help make it a place where your children find the peace or comfort they need. Consider planning a night where everyone participates in a favorite family activity.

Watch for signs of stress, fear or anxiety. After a traumatic event, it is typical for children (and adults) to experience a wide range of emotions, including fearfulness, shock, anger, grief and anxiety. Your children's behaviors may change because of their response to the event. They may experience trouble sleeping, difficulty with concentrating on school work or home responsibilities, changes in appetite, and



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

changes in mood. This is normal for everyone and should begin to disappear in four to six weeks, if no other traumatic events have occurred. Encourage your children to put their feelings into words by talking about them or journaling. Some children may find it helpful to express their feelings through art, such as drawing/painting pictures, telling stories, etc.

Take "news breaks." Your children may want to keep informed by gathering information about the event from the internet, television or newspapers. It is important to limit the amount of time spent watching the news or staying connected online because constant exposure may actually heighten their anxiety and fears. Also, talk to them about what they have seen or read.

Monitor adult conversations. Be aware that your children may be listening to your conversations. If they do not understand they will "fill in the gaps," which can increase anxiety.

Check in often. Be sure to check in regularly with your children as you monitor their coping. Provide extra time, attention and patience (even an extra hug).

Take care of yourself. Take care of yourself so you can take care of your children. Be a model for your children on how to manage traumatic events. Keep regular schedules for activities such as family meals and exercise to help restore a sense of security and normalcy. Don't over-schedule yourself to where you collapse from exhaustion; take your own breaks as well. It might only be five minutes where you step out of the room or house and take deep breaths or a quick walk, but five minutes of slowing down can give you a little needed space. Eating right and getting enough sleep is essential for everyone-including anyone taking care of children! Remember to take breaks from your exposure to coverage of the event; allow yourself time to engage in activities you enjoy.

Help is available. These tips and strategies can help you guide your children through a current crisis. If you or your children are feeling stuck or overwhelmed, you may want to consider talking to someone who could help. A licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can assist you and your children in developing an appropriate strategy for moving forward. It is important to [get professional help](#)

if you feel like you or your children are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living at any time.



Mental Health Awareness and Symptoms

What can you do to support mental health wellbeing?

While it is imperative that all adults in the lives of children are aware of the signs and symptoms of them suffering in some way, it is essential that we stay away from labelling a child/student with a mental health related issues. In fact, it is more important that we are well versed in understanding **trauma** and that we are creating and reinforcing school and community environments that are sensitive to that. Trauma has long lasting impact and can show up in many different ways. With that said, It can also be scary to look at a list of symptoms and have a list of students come to mind who seem to “fit the list” and not know what to do about it. We want you to know that we are here as resources to help you and your students navigate this.

OBJECTIVE:

- Awareness of mental health/trauma symptoms
- The impact of your role in providing a safe environment when interacting students

SYMPTOMS THAT MAY SIGNAL RISK, ESPECIALLY IF RELATED TO A PAINFUL EVENT, LOSS OR CHANGE:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Withdrawing from activities, social events, loss of interest hobbies
- Isolating from family, friend, stop interacting with others that they would have before
- Feeling nervous, restless, irritable, tense, trouble concentrating or making a decision
- Impending danger, panic/doom, constantly thinking/talking about their problem/s
- Breathing rapidly, sweating, trembling, aches/pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or being “slowed down”, feeling weak or tired all the time
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Changes to eating habits - not eating at all, or eating and then throwing up
- Acting out of character (i.e. a quiet person becoming loud or an outgoing person becoming really quiet), or unsafe situations, agitation, crying, and/or defiant.
- Suicide: Talking about killing themselves, having no reason to live, being a burden to others, feeling trapped, being a burden to others or having unbearable pain
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye, giving away prized possessions
- Thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, wanting to escape
- Acting or talking like no one cares about them; nobody would notice if they went away, or the world would be a better place without them.

CRISIS NUMBERS

- Suicide and Crisis Hotline 24/7- 1(855)278-4204 OR Text RENEW to 741741
- Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services- Mental Health Services 1(800)704-0900
- Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services- Substance Use Services 1(800)488-9919



Now What?...

What can you do to support mental health wellbeing?

How Can I help-

When a student turns to you for help, it's because they trust and respect you. When students confide in you, naturally you want to do all you can to help them. But sometimes it's hard to know what to say, how to help, or who to turn to for advice. After all, you are not a trained counselor/clinician. So here are some points to remember in order to look after the student, but also look after yourself.

- ✓ Show you care and give them time and attention. Often students don't need anything more than someone who is willing to just be there for them. Having a trusted adult that they can talk to is an important protective factor.
- ✓ Be yourself and be prepared to listen and understand what is happening to the student.
- ✓ Be non-judgmental, patient, calm, and accepting. The student may be reluctant to talk about their problem because they don't want to upset anyone, but they need to know they're doing the right thing by talking to someone.
- ✓ Know how and when to go to others for help. Encourage the student to seek help themselves. They may feel supported if you offer to go with them when they speak with a school counsellor or welfare advisor.
- ✓ If you feel out of your depth, don't try dealing with the situation alone. If you feel like the problem is serious or you have concerns for the student's welfare you must report it to your Principal. As mandatory reporters, teachers are required to report situations where they believe a young person is at risk of harm.

My Student Needs Help-

- If you do have concerns for the welfare of a student then don't be afraid to raise your concerns with them. They will often feel a sense of relief that someone has noticed and cares enough to ask how they are going.
- If your concerns are confirmed, then it is important to inform the appropriate staff within the school to ensure that the student receives the help and support they need to stay safe. Each school will have policies that identify the processes for notifying a concern about risk of harm to a student.

