

Supporting Your Student Through a Crisis

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Responding to students' questions after school violence can feel overwhelming. Oftentimes, we find ourselves at a loss for words to comfort them, hoping we are saying the "right" things. Here are some tips from the American School Counselor Association and the Child Mind Institute on how to best support students at a time when we all - teachers, parents, and students - are feeling the emotional aftereffects of a crisis.

- 01.** Assess your own response to crisis and stress. Being aware of your own thoughts and emotions can help bring self-awareness to the verbal and nonverbal messages you want to send your child/student.
- 02.** Try and keep routines as normal as possible. Kids gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- 03.** Limit exposure to television and the news. Feeling anxious and nervous about the situation is normal, but overconsumption of news could spark a level of unhealthy anxiety.
- 04.** Reassure kids that while there are people who do bad things, the world is overall a good place to be. Remind them of who their safety circle is (their teacher, school, parent, grandparent, etc.) and that they are encouraged to report their concerns or feelings to these people. There are many helpers in the world who are looking out for them.
- 05.** Listen to kids' fears and concerns. Validate their feelings about whatever fears, emotions, or thoughts arise. It is okay to let them know if you feel the same way.
- 06.** It is normal for students to be afraid to go back to their own school. Help them understand the difference between the possibility and probability of a crisis.
- 07.** Be honest with kids and share with them as much information as they are developmentally able to handle. Being as honest as possible about the reality of the situation builds trust between you and your student/child. If you aren't sure what to say, you can always ask your kids if they have any questions.
- 08.** Remind your children/students that in the state of Michigan, we have Okay2Say, a powerful tool they can use to submit or text a threat or concern they hear. According to Okay2Say, over 80% of students had heard rumors or threats about school violence before it happened. Even if they are unsure about the validity of the threat, Okay2Say provides a safe and anonymous space for them to submit a concern to authorities.

As always, build in healthy coping skills such as movement, sports, nighttime routines, or self-care activities. Students who feel heard, supported, and can identify healthy coping skills for everyday emotions have promising levels of hope and resiliency. For more information on this topic, read the articles attached below. Together, we can create safe and emotionally supportive environments for all children/students.

Resources

[Child Mind Institute - Anxiety Over School Shootings](#)
[EAP Consultants, LLC - Coping After a School Shooting](#)
[American School Counselor Association - Helping Students AFTER a School Shooting](#)

