

## HELPING CHILDREN COPE IN UNSETTLING TIMES

If your child does hear about it and has questions, then here are some other things you can do:

- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Children will take their cues from us. What happened is tragic, but it is far away from them. As hard as it may be for us to understand, they will only know what you talk about and allow them to see/hear.
- **Stick to the facts.** If your children have questions, answer them positively and factually. Try not to speculate about what “could” happen. Keep it simple.
- **Acknowledge their feelings.** For older children, allow them to talk about their feelings. Listen to their feelings and fears. Let them know that what they are feeling is normal.
- **Maintain a normal routine.** Be sure your children get plenty of sleep, regular meals and play time. A normal routine is reassuring to children.
- **Spend family time together.** Try to do things as a family as much as possible. Young children especially may want more affection and physical contact for reassurance. You know your children the best, and can anticipate their needs.
- **Take care of your own needs.** Talk with other adults (professionals if necessary), rather than your young children, about your own fears and thoughts.

Some children may be at risk of more extreme reactions because of personal circumstances. Symptoms may differ depending on age. Adults should contact a professional if children exhibit significant changes in behavior or any of the following symptoms over an extended period of time:

- **Preschoolers/Primary age children** – thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, withdrawal from friends and routines.
- **Elementary age children** – irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, withdrawal from friends and activities.