

As parents and caregivers, you play an important role in helping your children cope with the stress reactions that can follow these events. Here are some suggestions on how to support your child with the school violence that recently occurred in Florida:

1. **Reassure children they are safe.** Depending on the situation, point out factors that help ensure their immediate safety and that of their community.
2. **Let children know it is okay to feel upset.** Explain all feelings are okay when a tragedy like this occurs. Let your child talk about their feelings. Even anger is okay, but children may need help and patience from adults to assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
3. **Tell children the truth.** Don't try to pretend the event has not occurred or that it is not serious. Children are smart. They will be more worried if they think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening.
4. **Stick to the facts.** Don't embellish or speculate about what has happened, or where another attack might occur. Don't dwell on the scale or scope of the tragedy, particularly with young children.
5. **Be careful not to stereotype people or countries that might be associated with the violence.** Children can easily generalize negative statements and develop prejudice. Talk about tolerance and justice versus vengeance. ***Stop any bullying or teasing immediately.***
6. **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
 - **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that provides reassurance that they are safe and the daily structures of their lives will not change.
 - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy.
 - **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence and threats to safety in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society.
 - **For all children, encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!**
7. **Maintain a "normal" routine.** To the extent possible stick to normal classroom or family routines but don't be inflexible. Children may have a hard time concentrating on schoolwork or falling asleep at night.
8. **Monitor or restrict exposure** to scenes of the event as well as the aftermath. In particular, monitor exposure to social media. For older children, caution against accessing news coverage from only one source.
9. **Observe children's emotional state.** Depending on their age, children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of grief, anxiety or discomfort. Children will express their emotions differently. There is no right or wrong way to feel or express fear or grief.
10. **Provide an outlet for students' desire to help.** Consider making get well cards or sending letters to the families and survivors of the tragedy, or writing thank you letters to police officers, firefighters, and/or health care professionals.
11. **Keep lines of communication open between home and school.** Schools are a good place for children to experience a sense of normalcy. Being with their friends and teachers is helpful. Inform your school if you are concerned about how your child is coping so they can help you find available resources for extra support.
12. **Monitor your own stress level.** Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief, and anger. Talking to friends, family members, religious leaders, and mental health counselors can help. It is okay to let your children know you are sad, but that you believe things will get better. You will be better able to support your children if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner. Get appropriate sleep, nutrition, and exercise.

Resources and information from: www.nasponline.org