

Suggestions for Parents – Mass Violence Incidents

1. Understand that being upset or distressed when thinking about or encountering reminders of the incident is a normal reaction for both parents and children.
2. Parents should seek their own source of adult support in order to be a good resource to their children.
3. Model good coping methods for your child.
4. Parents should communicate to their children a sense of protection and safety.
 - They (the parents) will keep their child safe.
 - The child's school will keep them safe.
 - The child's teacher will keep them safe.
 - If they feel scared or fear they are in danger, tell a trusted adult.
5. When children ask questions about the shooting, parents should answer them as honestly as they can in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for each child, and engage in a conversation with their children about their specific concerns, fears and questions. Offer reassurance and share with them how you are coping with the distressing thoughts and feelings. Your positive coping is the best lesson for your child.
6. Common questions children are likely to ask:
 - What happened?
 - How many children were killed?
 - Why did this man shoot the children?
 - How did he get into the school, church, [site of the incident]?
 - Why didn't the teachers [or others] stop him?
 - Is it safe to go to my church, school [site of the incident]?
 - Is someone going to come and shoot me?

Answer these questions as factually as you can. The main goal is to have a conversation with your children, listen to their concerns and questions, answer them as best you can, and communicate that you and their schools will keep them safe. Help them understand that when these types of incidents happen, they are very tragic and we are very sad, but thankfully, they do not happen very often.

7. If a parent notices that a child seems upset or distressed by the news of the shootings, the parent should engage the child in a conversation about the incident and ask the child

what he or she is thinking and feeling about it. Ask about their concerns, fears, and questions. Listen and offer reassurance and support.

8. Limit children's viewing of television reports of the shootings to reduce vicarious trauma. If they do view news reports about it, try and be with them to talk about what is being reported and what they are thinking and feeling about it.

9. Limiting exposure to news stories of the shootings is good advice for the adults as well.