

Coping with Tragedy

Help Your Family Cope with Tragedy

When we hear about or experience tragic situations, our sense of safety is shaken.

Below are suggestions for families to use during these stressful times.

Talking with Children and Teens:

- **Spend time** being available to talk with your children.
- **Really listen** to them, listen twice as much as you talk, be aware of what their concerns might be, give clear, simple answers.
If you don't know the answer to a question, it's ok to say that.
- **Ask them what they already know.**
- **Encourage children to talk about their feelings**, worries, daydreams, and distractions. Accept the feelings they share, listen carefully, and remind them that these are normal reactions following a very scary event.
- **Provide information** in a simple, clear and age-appropriate manner. Answer questions without giving more information than is necessary.
- **Help your children feel safe.** Talk with them about their concerns over safety. Remind them of ways you keep them safe. Go over your family's communication plan and practice phone numbers. Encourage them to share their concerns with you.
- **Limit media exposure.** Protect them from too much media coverage. Explain that TV, radio, the Internet and social media can spread rumors and trigger fears.
- **Maintain expectations or "rules."** Stick with family rules, such as bedtimes, curfews, checking in with you while with friends, and keeping up with homework and chores. Staying in familiar routines will be reassuring.
- **Address 'acting out' behaviors.** Help them understand that acting out behaviors are a dangerous way to express strong feelings like anger and grief. You can say, *"It's normal to feel scared and angry right now. Some people may 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 about other ways of coping with these feelings such as fun activities, exercise, writing in a journal, spending time with family and friends.
- **Be patient.** It is normal for everyone to have a stress response to any potential threat in the environment. This can lead to a lack of patience. Remember, your loved one is not your enemy.

Suggestions for Adults:

- **Take care of yourself.** Drink plenty of water, eat healthy foods regularly, and get plenty of sleep and exercise.
- **Talk with others:** adults, friends, or members of the community, and 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.
- **Focus on the positive.** There are caring people and acts of kindness all around us.

Our Mission

Our mission is to strengthen individual, family and community wellness by providing exceptional, compassionate, inclusive, responsive and integrated behavioral health care.

Our Services

Counseling — Individual, Group, Family
Psychiatry
Case Management
Intensive In-Home Therapy
Substance Abuse Treatment
Criminal Justice Services
Victim Services
Bridge House Acute Treatment Unit
Vocational & Social Rehabilitation
School-Based Services
Integrated Healthcare Services
Pharmacy
Speakers Bureau
Education & Wellness Programs

Contact Info

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Emergency Intervention**
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