

# **Practical Suggestions for Assisting Children in Uncertain Times**

*Taken from A Practical Guide for Crisis Response in Our Schools*

## **1. Realistically provide reassurance about their safety.**

- Assure them that steps are being taken to make schools and communities safer places to live.
- Talk about coping strategies (a night light, sleeping with a sibling, talking with a parent, doing relaxation exercises, get outside and exercise, listen to music, practice an instrument, etc.).

## **2. Be aware of your own reactions to the event.**

- Young children take their cues on how to respond from the adults in their life's.
- Model calm behavior.
- Do not be critical of clingy behavior, somatic complaints, nightmares or other regressive behaviors. These are typically "normal" responses for children under a lot of stress.

## **3. Keep yourself available for providing extra attention to your child.**

- Provide opportunities for the child to talk and process what they are experiencing, this can provide a sense of closeness and security.
- Do not avoid discussion if your child wants to talk about it.

## **4. Monitor exposure to media.**

- Avoid having live programming (radio, T.V.) on around young children.
- Monitor what they are accessing on social media.

## **5. Be Mindful of the child's cognitive and emotional functioning level.**

- Too much information for a young child can cause confusion and insecurity.
- Use simpler words and concepts with younger children.
- With adolescents keep an open line of communication encourage discussion, but do not insist on it.

## **6. Use empathic communication by acknowledging, understanding and expressing an appreciation of your child's experience.**

- Try to comprehend the feelings that lie beneath the words and actions and convey that understanding.
- When appropriate express your own feelings (a great modeling opportunity).
- Reassure them that feelings of fear, sadness, anger, and guilt are "normal" or common reactions to an "abnormal" experience.

## **7. Do not speculate and give false information about what has taken place.**

- Do not hesitate to admit that you do not have answers or information.
- Do not dwell on the details and scope of the event, however strive to separate fact from fiction.

**8. Consider the reactions of children with histories of past traumatic experiences, losses or emotional disturbance.**

- Traumatic incidents tend to bring up past experiences.

**9. Make an effort to maintain a “normal” routine.**

- Do not be overly rigid in doing so, but routines can be comforting.

**10. Monitor you own emotional status.**

- Be aware of your own feelings of grief, anxiety, guilt and anger.
- Keep in touch with friends, family, clergy and other support networks.
- Try to get adequate amounts of sleep, nutrition and exercise.
- Do not hesitate to obtain professional help for yourself.