



Catholic Family Services

SPP (SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM)

www.cfsstl.org

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS EVENTS

Focus on your children's needs. Tell them you love them and reassure them they are safe at home and at school. Try to help them understand what has happened, keeping in mind their developmental level. Let them know you, their teachers, and principal are making sure they are safe at school.

Make time to talk with your children. Remember if you do not talk to your children about this someone else will. **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.

Stick to the facts. Don't embellish or speculate about what has happened and what might happen.

Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate. *Early elementary school* children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that 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 and what is being done at their school. 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!*

Monitor your own stress level. Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety. Talking to friends, family members, religious leaders, and mental health counselors can help. It is not a good idea to express anxiety about sending your children to school in their presence.

Stay close to your children. Your physical presence will reassure them and give you the opportunity to monitor their reaction. Many children will want actual physical contact. Give plenty of hugs. Let them sit close to you, and make sure to take extra time at bedtime to cuddle and to reassure them that they are loved and safe.

Maintain a "normal" routine. To the extent possible stick to your family's normal routine for dinner, homework, chores, bedtime, etc.

Watch for signs of stress. If your child exhibits signs anxiety lasting longer than 1-2 weeks and that interrupts normal daily functioning such as on-going nightmares or trouble sleeping, school refusal, mood changes, and/or withdrawal from regular activities you may want to consult with a mental health professional.

FOR QUESTION OR CONCERNS YOU MAY CONTACT;

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