



What Caregivers Can Do In the Aftermath of Campus Tragedies

As a caregiver, one of your most important concerns is the safety and well-being of your student. When a horrific act of violence happens, you may be wondering how you can help. First, it's important to know that college students will react differently. Some will seem to come through the experience unscathed. Others, may have delayed reactions. Some may even react strongly immediately after the event, even though they may have suffered little loss or directly experienced the threat. However, most students have normal and typical reactions to these abnormal circumstances.

Here are some things you can do to help:

Listen

It may be painful, but the best thing you can do for your student is to listen to them talk about the tragedy. Talking and writing in a journal are healthy ways for young adults to work through their reactions.

Comfort

Feel free to hold and comfort your student more during this time. They are reaching out to you for security right now. A little extra love and affection can help.

Reassure

You can also reassure your student that they are now safe. Remind them that you and campus staff are taking precautions to protect them.

Don't "rescue" or over-protective

This may be the most difficult thing for you to do, but you must fight the temptation to over-protect your child. It may be very hard even to let him/her out of your sight, but it's important that they return to a regular routine as soon as possible.

Be a positive example

Actions speak louder than words! By your actions you can set an example for your student about how to handle these reactions in a productive way.

Pay it forward

You may encourage your student to offer help to others. For example, they may want to volunteer their time to coordinate an event to raise awareness. Your student can learn more from our UCF Volunteer office or the Office of Student Involvement (OSI) on how to get involved.

When to seek help for your student

If your student has had serious losses, such as the death of a loved one, they may need more help. Encourage your student to see a professional if they are having extreme reactions to the tragedy, such as repeated nightmares, flashbacks, crying spells, behavior problems and panic reactions.

