

HELPING KIDS COPE

After a Tragedy

Kids often have many questions and concerns following a crisis, tragedy, or community violence. How parents respond to such incidents can greatly impact how children cope with the aftermath.

Given that every child is unique, parents should adjust their responses given each child's age and developmental level. Here is some general parenting advice:

- Keep discussions of the details of the tragedy or violence to a minimum. Emphasize the measures taken to restore safety.
- If your child has questions about the event, answer them honestly, but briefly.
- Pay attention to your child's feelings in response to the incident. Children, like adults, may feel sad, mad, worried, or confused. Validate these emotions as they are all appropriate under the circumstances.
- Encourage positive coping skills such as talking, writing, drawing, praying, playing, and exercising.
- Younger children often benefit most from reassurance that parents and other adults such as police officers, firefighters, and soldiers are going to do everything possible to keep them safe.
- Older children might want to offer to help. In that case, think about what acts of love and service you can suggest to channel the emotion in positive ways. Praying for victims and their families, sending cards of encouragement to those impacted, or donating a portion of their allowance are examples of positive actions.
- Spend time reflecting on Scripture that reassures us that God is still in control and has good plans for us, like Jeremiah 29:11; John 16:33; Psalm 23:4; or Isaiah 41:33.



Sheryl Cowling, MSW, LCSW, DCC, BCPC, BCETS Sheryl has 25 years of experience providing counseling services to children, adolescents and adults. She is Board Certified as a Professional Christian Counselor and an Expert in Traumatic Stress. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in WI.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment with a Christian counselor, please call **800-438-1772** or visit ChristianFamilySolutions.org.

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