



Supporting Youth After Community Violence

The aftermath of a shooting or other instance of community violence can be traumatic, affecting families differently. Everyone responds to trauma differently and what may be traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another. The timeline for recovery can vary widely based on experiences during and after the event. Support from relatives, friends, and community is crucial.

Children and teens may have varying reactions, influenced by responses from the trusted adults around them. Common reactions lessen with time but understanding them can aid in providing support. On the next page, you will find some common reactions you might see in youth and how you can help.

In order to be able to most fully support your child, adults need to allow themselves time to process their own reactions to the traumatic event. This will allow you to be able to better help your child express their feelings and concerns and offer age-appropriate information and support.

Helping Youth after Community Violence

CHILDREN MAY REACT WITH:

Feelings of anxiety and worry about their safety or the safety of others.
Becoming unwilling to leave home.

Changes in behavior including:

- Decrease in concentration and attention.
- Increase in irritability and anger
- Sadness and/or withdrawal.
- Changes in sleep or appetite.
- Lack of interest in usual activities.

Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches, aches and pains).

Increased sensitivity to sounds (loud noises and screaming).

Having negative trauma-related responses such as believing the incident will occur again.

Withdraw from family and friends and retreat to social media, gaming or online activities.

YOU CAN HELP BY:

Actively listen to their concerns and emotions. It is helpful to help young children verbalize their feelings so they don't feel alone with their emotions.

Educate them on various trauma reactions. If you are supporting more than one child, avoid assuming that all children experience things similarly or require assistance, but instead, strive to cater to their individual reactions.

Be patient when dealing with behavioral changes. Maintain a calm demeanor while establishing boundaries. Reintroduce regular school routines and activities. Seek professional assistance if there are worries about self-harm or risky behaviors.

Acknowledge that physical reactions can be confusing or frightening for youth, potentially intensifying their fear. Encourage students to employ relaxation techniques like deep breathing, stretching, or engaging in physical activities.

Discuss safety concerns with children and address community changes that enhance safety. Encourage your child to share their worries with you or with teachers at school.

Limit your child's media exposure, whether on the Internet, radio, television, or social media. Clarify to them that media and social media reports can evoke fears of the event recurring and propagate rumors. Explain that physical responses are common after a trauma when they are on high alert. Suggest using calming strategies such as slow breathing.

Recommend engaging in activities they enjoy. Explore strategies for managing feelings of sadness and emphasize the importance of seeking in-person support by talking to family or friends instead of relying solely on online connections. Help them connect with other trusted adults.