

SUPPORT AT HOME FOR YOUR TEEN AFTER A TRAGIC EVENT

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Be nurturing and comforting. Respond to your child's basic needs. Provide him/her with rest, comfort, food and opportunities to relax.
2. Encourage your child to draw on their faith, noticing blessings, moments of compassion and signs of hope during this difficult time. Pray together.
3. Be cautious about and limit your child's exposure to media about the event - including social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook etc. Caution your teen about participating in speculation and rumor and encourage them to communicate with supportive friends and trusted adults.
4. Help your son/daughter to share his/her feelings with you. Listen as much as you talk. Do not tell your child how he/she should or should not feel. Help them to put labels on the feelings you hear being expressed to increase understanding.
5. Reassure your child that his/her feelings may not be the same as those of siblings or friends and that their feelings are normal. Help your child accept that they may experience a range of emotions such as confusion, sadness, grief, guilt, anger, or anxiety and worry.
6. Understand that physical reactions such as headaches, fatigue, etc. can be normal responses to grief/loss and a child's attempts to avoid thoughts of the tragic event.
7. Encourage your child to let you know when he/she is thinking about the tragic event or when new reactions occur.
8. Give your child support by keeping to your regular routines. Check in with them periodically, especially at bedtime. Limit tasks and keep them simple.
9. Recognize that children will sometimes revert to old behaviours such as nail biting, as well as acting-out. These behaviours are normal reactions and should be discussed rather than punished.
10. Be patient with difficulties in concentration, completing schoolwork, etc. It is not unusual for a child's school performance to decline temporarily.
11. Help your child to understand the relationship between his/her feelings and the tragic event and encourage your son/daughter to find safe ways to express his/her feelings (i.e. drawing pictures, writing, talking, exercise, etc.).

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Romans 15:13*)

TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE WITH YOUR TEEN

1. It is important to remember that talking about suicide will NOT cause a young person to consider suicide. It can be an opportunity to communicate that you as their parent will always support them, that reaching out for help is important, and that all problems can be fixed with the right help.
2. It is best for you and your child if you express your feelings honestly and in a manner that is appropriate for your child's age and situation.
 - For example, with a tween, you may want to briefly share your own emotional reaction and then shift to helping your child label his or her own reaction, "I am really sad that Jonathan died by suicide. It is terrible that some kids feel so sad and helpless. I imagine that you might be feeling pretty sad and confused."
 - When speaking with older adolescents, you want to acknowledge the complexity of your own emotional reactions balanced with attending to your teen's emotional needs. For example, "I am devastated that Kayla suicided. I get so sad and angry when I hear about the death of a young person, it seems so unfair. I bet this is really hard for you too."
3. One of the hardest things for teens to understand is why someone would try to take their own life.
 - You can explain that sometimes people feel so sad and distressed that they are unable to see a solution other than ending the pain by dying. Their mind can focus so narrowly on dying that they can't think clearly about their situation and other possible solutions. They don't understand that they don't have to feel that way, that they can get help.
 - In some situations, there may not be clear signs that a person was struggling with thoughts of suicide. This can leave us feeling shocked and with many unanswered questions.
4. Be open to your child's questions and respond honestly. It's OK to say "I don't know the answer to that question".
5. If changes in your teen's behaviour or personality concern you, seek the support of a mental health professional.

Community Supports

London/Middlesex Crisis Intake Team

- 24 hour support for children & youth ages 0 to 18
- 519-433-0334

Oxford/Elgin Child & Youth Centre – Crisis Response/Urgent Care

- 24 hour support for children & youth ages 0 to 18
- 519-539-0463

Reach Out Services: Mental Health & Addictions Crisis Services

- 24 hour support for youth and adults age 16 years and older
- 519-433-2023
- www.reachout247.ca

Kid's Help Phone

- 24 hour support for children & youth age 20 and under
- 1-800-668-6868
- www.kidshelpphone.ca