

## *Suggestions from the National Mental Health Association for helping a child cope with news of a school shooting:*

Validate the child's feelings. Do not minimize a child's concerns. Let him/her know that serious school violence is not common. Stress that schools are safe places. In fact, recent studies have shown that schools are more secure now than ever before.

Empower children to take action regarding school safety. Encourage them to report specific incidents (such as bullying, threats, or talk of suicide) and to develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Encourage older children to actively participate in student-run anti-violence programs.

Discuss the safety procedures that are in place at your child's school. Explain why visitors sign in at the main office and why all exterior doors must remain locked during the school day. Help your child understand that such precautions are in place to ensure his or her safety and stress the importance of adhering to school rules and policies.

Create safety plans with your child. Help identify which adults your child can talk to if they feel threatened at school. Also ensure that your child knows how to reach you (or another family member or friend) in case of crisis during the school day. Remind your child that they can talk to you anytime they feel threatened.

Recognize behavior that may indicate your child is concerned about returning to school. Younger children may react to school violence by not wanting to attend school or participate in school-based activities. Teens and adolescents may minimize their concerns outwardly, but may become argumentative, withdrawn, or allow their school performance to decline.

Seek help when necessary. If you are worried about a child's reaction or have ongoing concerns about his/her behavior or emotions, contact a school counselor or mental health professional.