



October 3, 2017

Greetings LCCS Community,

When tragedy strikes in our global community, albeit a natural disaster, terror attack or mass shooting, children look to trusted adults in their lives to make them feel safe. This is true, no matter what age your children are, be they toddlers, adolescents or even young adults.

After any disaster, parents/guardians and educators struggle with what they should say and share with children and what not to say or share with them. You are encouraged to filter information about these crises and present it in a way that your children can accommodate, adjust to and cope with. Here are some helpful suggestions you can use when broaching these topics with your children:

- Help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing and singing. Most children want to talk about trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset or stressed. Be in tune with what they are verbally and non-verbally saying.
- Ask children for what they already know and/or perceive about the event(s). Ask explicit questions like, "What are you seeing on television?" or "What are you hearing in school?" Try to watch news coverage on TV and Internet with them and engage them in discussion that is developmentally and age-appropriate. Try not to continuously watch the news for long periods of time, as the disturbing images and messages have the potential to traumatize children, potentially resulting in anxiety and/or PTSD.
- Help children see that good can come out of traumatic events. Heroic actions, families, friends and communities who help, and support people near and far are great examples. Children may better cope with traumatic events and disasters by engaging in ways that provide assistance and help to others. Encourage these kinds of activities.
- Be careful not to blame a cultural, racial or ethnic group, or persons with psychiatric disabilities. This may be a great opportunity to discuss discrimination and diversity, while explaining the world is still a good, safe place to live, but there are people who make bad choices.
- Model self-care and healthy ways to deal with the stress these events have caused. Show children how to take care of themselves in ways that promote good physical, emotional and social health.

Sometimes it can be hard to tell if a child is reacting in a typical way to a traumatic event or whether they are having real problems coping, and might need extra support. If you are concerned, please contact LCCS' School Counselor, Shanelle Muse ([smuse@lccsnj.org](mailto:smuse@lccsnj.org)) or LCCS' School Social Work, Melissa MacKenzie ([mmackenzie@lccsnj.org](mailto:mmackenzie@lccsnj.org)).

In partnership,

Shanelle Muse

School Counselor

*"Being human is a given, but keeping our humanity is a choice."*