

# Supporting Loved Ones After a Critical Incident



## Encourage Self-Care

- Promote their self-care and practice it alongside them.
- Offer gentle encouragement to have regular meals, stay hydrated, get adequate rest, and engage in movement.
- Let them know it is OK to take a break from talking with others about the recent attacks, participating in memorial events, or in advocacy efforts.

## Be Willing to have Open Conversations

- Ask how they are feeling and what they are thinking about vs. assuming
- Remain open to answering questions and providing helpful information and support. Not knowing all the answers is OK.
- Respect their space by not pushing them to talk, but assure them you are available when they are ready.
- Try asking what support they need. Understand that victims or survivors may find it challenging to identify their needs in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event.

## Accept their Response without Judgment

- Everyone responds to a traumatic event in their own unique way. If they are not harming themselves or others, accept your loved one's expression of their distress.
- Repetitive accounts of the event are part of the healing process.
- Limit talking about your own responses, unless explicitly asked.
- Do not rush to resolve their pain, be patient and encourage their emotional expression.

## Remind Yourself of Their Resilience

- Most people are extraordinarily resilient and capable of moving forward after experiencing a tragedy.
- Following a crisis, people often feel overwhelmed and distressed, but these responses are typically transitory and rarely suggest a serious mental disturbance or illness.
- Experiencing a tragic event can often reveal an individual's untapped strengths and abilities.

# Supporting Loved Ones After a Critical Incident



## Helpful Statements

- "The feelings you're having are understandable."
- "What help do you need right now?"
- "I'd like to be with you, if that's all right."
- "I don't know what to say, but I care."
- "What's the hardest part for you today?"
- "Can I bring you a meal?"
- "When you're ready to talk, I'm here."

## Unhelpful Statements

- "Be strong."
- "It will be better soon."
- "Everything happens for a reason"
- "Count your blessings."
- "You're better off than other people."
- "Keep your chin up."
- "You have to put it behind you and get on with your life."
- "Time will heal."
- "You need to stop crying"
- "Why are you still talking about this?"

## Encourage Professional Help if Needed

- Seeking help when one is in need of it is a sign of strength and aids in resilience.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services** can be reached at 401-863-3476 for routine and crisis appointments.
- **TimelyCare** is an extension of CAPS and can be accessed via an app or website from any location in the USA – enrolled students have free access to scheduled teletherapy sessions and digital self-care content.