

Ten Tips for Parents or Caregivers to Support Loved Ones

Counseling and Psychological Services

1 Focus on Safety, Not Solutions

- Let your home be a place of rest, not interrogation.
- Allow routines to be flexible—sleep, meals, and schedules may be off.
- Offer choices instead of demands to help them feel in control.

2 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.

3 Normalize and Validate

- Remind them their reactions make sense given what they lived through.
- Validate their anger.
- Set gentle boundaries if their behavior becomes hurtful
- Stay calm and grounded.

4 Accept Their Response Without Judgment

- 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 fix their pain, be patient and encourage their emotional expression.
- Being present and calm helps their nervous system settle.

5 Limit Media/News Exposure

- Explain to them that news coverage and social media can be overwhelming; encourage them to take breaks from it.
- Offer healthy distractions by engaging in activities together as a family or they can talk to you about what they are seeing online and how they are feeling.

6 Respect Their Need for Connection

- Time with friends (in person or online) can be healing.
- Staying connected to their campus community may feel essential to recovery.



Ten Tips for Parents or Caregivers to Support Loved Ones

Counseling and Psychological Services

7 Address Radical Changes in Attitudes

- Normalize changes in people's attitudes, explain their temporary nature after a tragedy like this.
- Feelings can include anger, despair, confusion, and fear.
- Find other ways to make them feel more in control and talk about their feelings

8 Address shame / self-blame / guilt

- Normalize these feelings as common.
- Gently correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done.
- Reassure them that they did not cause any of the deaths and that it was not a punishment for anything that anyone did "wrong."
- You can say, "Many people feel like you do. They are angry and blame themselves, thinking they could have done more. You are not at fault. There was nothing more you could have done."

9 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 untapped strengths and abilities.

10

Find Time to Have Conversations

- Use time such as when you eat together or sit together in the evening to talk about what is happening in the family as well as in the community.
- Ask how they are feeling and what they are thinking about vs. assuming
- Try not to have these conversations close to bedtime, as this is the time for resting.



Encourage Professional Help if Needed

Consider reaching out for professional help if they are experiencing persistent distress that interferes with daily functioning.

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.