



### **Helping Children Cope When Tragedy Impacts Our Community**

*OUR HOUSE Provides Advice to Assist San Bernardino Families Impacted by School Shooting*

**West Los Angeles, CA (April 11, 2017)** - As our community mourns and reacts to the recent San Bernardino school shooting, we at OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center are eager to assist families in dealing with the feelings and emotions that arise in response to these types of traumatic events. Whether in response to the aftermath of a shooting occurred at a school, congregation, work place, vigil or nightclub, adults struggle to find the words to comfort and support their children. At a loss for the “right” words or fearing a strong reaction, adults may avoid the topic altogether. Far too often children are left to cope alone while they struggle to understand and make sense of tragic events.

The following are some suggested ways to approach the subject, address feelings, and provide a sense of safety and containment for children:

1. First, determine the level of knowledge and understanding about the traumatic event. Ask if they have questions or feelings that they want to discuss.
2. Respect your child’s need to know and assess their level of exposure to the facts. Be prepared to provide details and answers in an age-appropriate and honest way. For example: “a bad person used a gun to shoot people at a school.” You can follow up by saying “do you have any questions?” and then add information based on their questions.
3. Provide a safe environment for your children to express their concerns and feelings. Let them know that all feelings are okay.
4. Address your child’s fears for their own safety by offering reassurance that their school and home are safe places and that they are cared for in both.
5. Limit exposure to news coverage and adult conversations about the traumatic event as much as possible. Turn off the television and monitor internet usage.
6. Decrease nighttime anxieties by preparing your child for bedtime by engaging in soothing activities such as listening to soft music, warm baths and bedtime stories.
7. Seek professional help if your child exhibits extreme changes in their sleeping, eating, mood or behavior.
8. Protect your own physical and emotional health by talking to someone you trust, exercising, eating healthy foods and knowing that all of your own feelings are okay.



9. Honor the memory of those who died and decrease feelings of helplessness by making a card or sending a donation to the families affected by the tragedy.

Finally, remember that you're not alone. The entire Los Angeles and San Bernardino communities are mourning with you. As a member of this community, the Our House family is eager to help by providing the community with grief support services, education, resources and hope.

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### **About Our House Grief Support Center**

*Founded on the premise that griever's need understanding, support, and connections, the grief counselors and staff at OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center has been providing grief support programs and education since 1993. The Our House family of staff and volunteers understand that grief is a natural reaction after death, and work together to prepare group participants and impacted community members address the intensity and duration of the grief process.*