

National Tragedy

God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble. *Psalms 46:1*

When a national tragedy occurs, it can be overwhelming for everyone, especially teens who might be grappling with complex emotions and questions. As a parent, your role is to provide a safe space for them to express their feelings and fears. Encourage open and honest conversations letting them know it's okay to feel scared, confused, or upset. Remind them of the steadfast love and presence of God, even in the darkest times. Assure them that it's normal to have questions and doubts during such events, and you are there to support and guide them through these challenging moments.

➤ conversation starter

How are you feeling about what happened in the news? It's okay to share any thoughts or emotions.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the tragedy? I'm here to listen and talk through them with you.

➤ navigating the conversation:

- **Be Honest and Open:** When discussing the tragedy, be truthful yet mindful of their age and emotional maturity. It's important to provide facts without causing unnecessary alarm. If you don't know the answer to a question, it's okay to say so and suggest looking up the information together.
- **Encourage Expression of Emotions:** Acknowledge and validate their feelings, whether they are feeling sad, afraid, angry, or confused. Encourage them to express these emotions in healthy ways, such as through conversation, journaling, art, or music. This helps them process their feelings and prevents bottling up emotions.
- **Limit Media Exposure:** Continuous exposure to graphic images and reports can be distressing and may amplify anxiety. Encourage breaks from news and social media and discuss the importance of finding reliable sources to avoid misinformation and sensationalism.
- **Reassure Teens:** Talk about their personal safety and the safety measures in place in their community and school.
- **Focus on the Good:** Share stories of heroism, compassion, and unity that often emerge in the aftermath of a tragedy. This can help to restore faith in humanity and provide a more balanced perspective on the event, highlighting the good in people even in the worst of times.
- **Pray Together:** Offer to pray with your teens for those affected by the tragedy. Prayer can be a powerful way to find comfort and peace, and it can help them feel connected to those who are suffering.
- **Discuss God's Presence:** Talk about how God's love and comfort are constant, even in chaos and sorrow. Discuss how faith can be a source of strength and how God often uses people and circumstances to bring healing and hope in difficult times.
- **Monitor Their Well-Being:** In the days and weeks following the tragedy, keep an eye on your teens' emotional and mental health. Be alert for signs of prolonged distress, such as changes in sleep, appetite, or mood, and don't hesitate to seek professional help if necessary.
- **Don't Make Promises That Are Outside of Your Control:** While we want to comfort our children, we should not make promises that we have no control over. You cannot promise that everything will be okay. However, you can promise that no matter what happens God is still on His throne. He can be trusted. He loves us, and our eternal security is in Him, not in what happens in the world.

