Tips for Tragedy Response

In light of the mass shootings in schools, children have been exposed to trauma, which can result in them feeling confused, frightened and helpless. These feelings can often be overlooked or minimized. For this reason, it’s important for the adults to respond with comfort and support. It can be tough to talk about, but you can be the greatest strength for your child, and they can be yours.

Here are some tips for you and your children, following a tragedy:

♥ **Listen**
   Give the child a safe space to react, however they need. Be patient and attentive to what they need to share or ask.

♥ **Acknowledge**
   Acknowledge and validate their emotions. Let them know it’s normal to feel afraid or anxious and they’re not alone in feeling that emotion.

♥ **Be gentle**
   Remain calm, use a soft tone and even-paced words. Allow time for reactions and any questions they may have.

♥ **Be reassuring**
   Remember to emphasize that you are there and be a comforting presence. Give the best sense of security you can.

♥ **Engage in stress reducing exercises**
   - Practice deep breathing
     *Think the word “Calm” as you breathe in and “Tension” as you breathe out*
   - Take a mindful walk, alone or with your children
     *As you walk, focus on your senses*
   - Sing out loud
     *Singing changes oxygen flow and can relieve stress*

Children don’t say, “I had a hard day, can we talk?”
They say, “Will you play with me?”

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