

# Parent Guide for Supporting Children after a Shooting



In the wake of yet another shooting, parents may be wondering how best to support their children in processing the tragedy. Children may be unaware of what is going on, express fear and anxiety about going to school, or have a lot of questions that you as a parent may have difficulty answering. Clinical experts at Little Otter want to share some concrete strategies and tips that you can use to help validate your child's feelings and cope in uncertain times.



## Your Response is Valid

It is OK for your child to see you express sadness and grief over the recent tragedy. It helps normalize feelings and communicate to your child that feelings are OK in response to hard things.

At the same time, as a parent, you are a source of safety and strength for your child.

## Meet Your Child Where They Are

Younger children may not know what has happened and will not be exposed to the news events. Older children may be hearing from peers or social media sources about the shooting.

It is important to meet your child where they are by responding to questions using age-appropriate, gentle, direct, and clear language. You know your child best.



## Practice Self-Care as a Family

In order to be a source of strength for your child, it is important to take care of yourself. Drink plenty of water, eat regular meals, and take time to rest. Encourage your child to do the same. Practicing self-care as a family will help you all to cope in the face of hard times and uncertainty.

## Strategies to Support Your Child

Here at Little Otter, we follow research-based information from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (<https://www.nctsn.org/>). Below are some helpful strategies recommended by experts at the National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

- ❖ **Spend time talking with your child.** Give them an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered by you, a trusted and safe adult.
- ❖ **Help your child feel safe.** Let your child know that you are a strong adult in their life. Encourage your child to “look for the helpers” in your community that keep children safe such as emergency responders.
- ❖ **Limit media exposure especially for younger children.**
- ❖ **Monitor changes in your child's behavior and peer relationships.** Seek professional help if big changes in mood or behavior persist following a tragedy.