



# Fort Lee Public Schools

## Fort Lee High School

3000 Lemoine Avenue ♦ Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024

Phone: 201.585.4675 ♦ Fax: 201.585.2296

[www.FLBOE.com](http://www.FLBOE.com)

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Dear Parents and Community Members,

In the aftermath of a highly publicized tragedy, parents often question how to address their children. Acts of violence are hard even for adults to comprehend and, sadly, we can't shield our children from pain and fear when they're exposed to tragedy. All children react to stress differently and may respond differently. Some children may appear scared and fearful and some may have no reaction at all but both are perfectly normal. What we can do is help our children process what they're experiencing in the healthiest way possible.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the Child Mind Institute suggests the following:

- **Start the conversation.** It is important to keep in mind your child's developmental level and capacity for understanding. It is ok to talk about the shooting with your child. Not talking about it can make the event even more threatening in your child's mind. With social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) it is highly unlikely they have not heard about it. Allow your child to verbally or actively process the event. This could be done through talking or writing and picture drawing.
- **What does your child already know?** Start by asking what your child/teen already has heard about the events from the media and from friends. Listen carefully; try to figure out what he or she knows or believes. As your child explains, listen for misinformation, misconceptions, and underlying fears or concerns.
- **Gently correct inaccurate information.** If your child/teen has inaccurate information or misconceptions, take time to provide the correct information in simple, clear, age appropriate language.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions, and answer those questions directly.** Your child may have some difficult questions about the incident. For example, she may ask if it is possible that it could happen at your workplace; she is probably really asking whether it is "likely." The concern about re-occurrence will be an issue for caregivers and children/teens alike. While it is important to discuss the likelihood of this risk, she is also asking if she is safe. This may be a time to review plans your family has for keeping safe in the event of any crisis situation. Do give any information you have on the help and support the victims and their families are receiving. Like adults, children/teens are better able to cope with a difficult situation when they have the facts about it. Having question-and-answer talks gives your child ongoing support as he or she begins to cope with the range of emotions stirred up by this tragedy. Provide lots of reassurance and validation of what your child is feeling.



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- **Limit media exposure.** Limit your child's exposure to media images and sounds of the shooting, and do not allow your very young children to see or hear any TV/radio shooting related messages. Even if they appear to be engrossed in play, children often are aware of what you are watching on TV or listening to on the radio. What may not be upsetting to an adult may be very upsetting and confusing for a child.
- **Be a positive role model.** Do not transfer your anxieties to your child. You may express sadness and empathy for the victims and their families.

Another excellent resource for review can be found at <http://www.cmionline.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Florida-Shooting-2018.pdf> Please keep in mind your child's principal, teacher, school counselors and Child Study Team members are available to you and your child for additional information and support.

Sincerely,

*Lauren Carrubba*

Director of School Counseling Services