

In the days after a traumatic event, it is common for children and adolescents to have a wide range of reactions and emotions. For most students, this is the first time they have experienced the death of a peer. It is helpful for trusted adults (parents, teachers, coaches, clergy, etc...) to make themselves more available to talk with the kids about their feelings/reactions and monitor their behavior. In the initial weeks following a traumatic loss, **normal reactions** may include:

- Increased sense of vulnerability for self, friends and/or family
- Disruption of sleep or appetite
- Vacillating between disbelief/shock and sadness/anger

However, a few children may experience more troubling behaviors which require immediate attention. Please **ask for help** if you see your child exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- Pulling away from people and things, becoming isolated
- Having little or no energy
- Frequent and recurring nightmares
- Feeling hopeless or helpless (e.g., like nothing matters)
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling unusually confused or forgetful; on edge, angry, or upset; or worried and scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Having intense thoughts and memories that can't quit thinking about
- Thoughts of wanting to hurt or kill self
- Unable to perform daily tasks like bathing, eating or getting to school

As parents you know your child better than anyone else. Trust your instincts regarding how your child is coping. If you have any questions or just want to check in about your child, please feel free to call us at (215) 646-3300.