



The
Jewish
Board

Supporting Your Child After a Campus Crisis

JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES

When a school shooting or serious campus crisis occurs, it affects not only students, but the families who love them. Parents often feel frightened, vigilant, and unsure how to help — especially when children cope in very different ways and the path forward feels uncertain.

There is no single “right” response. What helps most is understanding what trauma does to the body and responding with steadiness and patience.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BODY AFTER TRAUMA

After a life-threatening or frightening event, the body’s survival system activates automatically. This response is biological, not intentional.

Common **acute stress reactions** include:

- Feeling on edge, easily startled, or irritable
- Trouble sleeping, fatigue, or racing thoughts
- Emotional numbness or intense waves of fear, sadness, anger, or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or feeling disconnected
- Wanting closeness one moment and distance the next

These reactions are normal responses to abnormal events. They reflect a nervous system trying to restore safety, not weakness or lack of resilience. For many people, symptoms soften over time with support, routine, and rest.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE MOST HELPFUL

What tends to help:

- Offer calm, predictable presence rather than frequent questioning
- Listen without rushing to reassure, fix, or interpret
- Normalize that reactions may change day to day
- Support basic needs: sleep, meals, movement, structure
- Let your child lead how much they want to talk

Consistency and availability are often more regulating than conversation.

We’re Here to Help

Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or just in need of someone to talk to? The Jewish Community Services team is here for you.

We offer supportive one-on-one conversations, crisis intervention, listening circles, and resources to help you care for yourself through difficult moments.

Please reach out to us by emailing JCSsupport@jbfcs.org.

REINFORCING STRENGTHS AND SUPPORTS

Trauma can narrow perspective and make coping resources feel out of reach. Parents can help by gently reminding children of the strengths and supports they already have.

Helpful approaches include:

- Naming **internal supports**: coping skills, values, problem-solving abilities, faith or meaning, creative outlets
- Identifying **external supports**: trusted friends, family members, mentors, community, professional supports
- Reminding your child of **past challenges they have navigated** and what helped them then
- Reflecting back moments of courage, adaptability, and perseverance you have seen

This is not about pushing positivity, but about reconnecting your child to their innate resilience.



SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION BACK TO CAMPUS

Returning to the place where a traumatic event occurred can reactivate stress, even when a student wants to go back.

Helpful ways to support this transition:

- Expect mixed emotions; readiness and fear can coexist
- Encourage gradual re-entry when possible
- Help plan grounding strategies for the first days back
- Avoid pressure to “be fine” once school resumes
- Normalize that symptoms may briefly resurface and then settle

Anticipation is often harder than the return itself.

WHEN MORE SUPPORT MAY BE NEEDED

Consider reaching out for guidance if you notice:

- Symptoms that worsen or do not ease over time
- Ongoing difficulty sleeping, attending class, or functioning
- Panic attacks, severe withdrawal, or loss of hope
- Statements about feeling unsafe or not wanting to be here

For immediate safety concerns, contact **988** or emergency services.

A Note for Parents

Your nervous system affects your child’s sense of safety. Caring for yourself — limiting distressing news, seeking adult support, slowing down — is not separate from helping your child. It is part of it.