

Following Tragedy On Campus: What Family Members Can Do

As a family member, one of your most important concerns is the safety and well-being of your loved one. When tragic events occur on campus, you may wonder how you can help. Although most students will likely experience some distress when a terrible event occurs, there are a range of “normal” reactions and there is not a single “right” way to react. Some people may appear to be unaffected now but develop reactions later. Others may react strongly from the start, even if they have not experienced a personal loss or had their safety threatened directly.

You can help your student by:

Listening.

One of the best things you can do is to invite your student to talk about their experience with you. They may or may not take you up on the offer, and it is best not to force them to talk if they do not wish to. If they do choose to share their experience with you, just allow them time to express themselves in the way that they need to.

Comforting.

Feel free to comfort your student more during this time. If they are reaching out to you for security, a little extra love can help.

Reassuring.

Once the campus has been cleared of any danger, you can reassure your student that they are safe. Remind them that you and Mason are taking precautions to protect them.

Not being overprotective.

For parents, this may be difficult to do, but be aware of any urge to overprotect your student. It may be hard to let them out of your sight, but it’s important that they return to a routine as soon as they are able.

Being a good example.

You can set an example for your student and show them how to handle their reactions productively. As best you can, try to model healthy coping strategies and resilience.

Seeking help if your student is suffering severe problems.

If your student experienced a loss, such as the death of a loved one or friend, they may need more help. Encourage your student to seek help if they are having significant or ongoing reactions to the tragic event, such as repeated nightmares, flashbacks, crying spells, behavioral issues, and anxiety.

Mental Health Resources for Mason Students

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) 703-993-2380
- [TimelyCare](#)
- [Student Health Services](#) 703-993-2831
- [Patriots Thriving Together](#)

Adapted from: <https://caps.msu.edu/emergency/What Can Family Members Do/index.html>