

Remembering and Responding to Community Tragedy

In just a few short weeks, the one-year anniversary of the tragedy at Arapahoe High School will be upon us. Time is said to heal all wounds, and much healing has happened in our community since last December. However, the anniversary of any traumatic event is likely to stir up emotions and feelings in many people, adults and students alike. As the anniversary of December 13, 2013 approaches, tune into your own feelings and those of the people close to you. I'm offering some behaviors to be aware of and ways in which you can be supportive when someone is struggling.



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All people react differently to trauma regardless of their age or connection to the event. Typically, though, people may become irritable, fearful, withdrawn or anxious. These are common feelings and they are OK. You can help students, teachers, friends and family in these ways:

- **Be honest and open when talking with children and teens and listen to their concerns.** You may notice changes in eating, sleeping and socialization patterns. Whenever a person's regular life habits change drastically, it is usually a sign that they are in distress. An anniversary of a traumatic event can cause those things to happen. Listen to them, provide support and if you become concerned or if symptoms persist, listen to your gut, take action, get them help from a professional.
- **Be prepared that the anniversary is nearing.** It will be helpful to have some idea about how you want to spend your time around this date. Think through what resiliency strategies work well for you. Some ideas include; connecting with others, journaling, quiet time to reflect, participating in activities that you enjoy, exercise, eating healthy, avoiding caffeine, sugar, nicotine and alcohol and most importantly do what you can to get plenty of sleep. In addition, it always feels good to focus outside of ourselves. Consider reaching out to others to offer a hand, to give a word of encouragement, to share a meal or participate in an activity that benefits others.
- **It is likely that there will be continual media coverage of the events of last year.** Monitor media intake so as not to overload on details and facts or others opinions which may have a negative effect on you or a loved one.

Anniversaries, good and bad, serve the purpose of marking a milestone and the passage of time. It is healthy to acknowledge the past as well as the strides towards healing that have been made in the last year. Let's be prepared for this milestone and make good choices for ourselves and one another. This will enable us to continue healing, connecting and taking positive steps forward.

- [Find useful resources and tips on our website.](#)
- [Concerned about your teens mood?](#) Follow this link and choose "Concerned about my teen's mood" to take a free and confidential screening.