

## **Helping Children and Youth Cope with Violent Loss-Tips for Parents**

The horrific and tragic loss of life in Orlando is yet another reminder of violent, hate-driven events that have occurred across our country and around the world. Exposure to such unacceptable and incomprehensible acts creates a level of fear and anxiety regarding our safety and the safety of our youth. Further, the recent attack not only appears to have been targeted toward members of the LGBT community, but is also an assault on all of us who worship the freedoms that our country is built upon. Therefore, it is likely that the children and youth of our community will experience a range of emotions in response to the acts of June 12, 2016. As a result, we are providing parents the following recommendations for supporting children and youth as they grapple with trying to understand and process this tragedy.

- Model calm and control; youth will follow your lead.
- Reassure children that they are safe.
- Remind them that caring adults are watching over them.
- Make time to talk with your child; be truthful, but avoid unnecessary details.
- Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.
- Maintain a normal routine.
- Limit exposure to media coverage of the tragedy, especially for younger children.
- Help process thoughts and emotions that are shared.
- Be patient with your child, understanding that grief is an individual experience. As a means of coping, some children may regress to younger age behaviors. They may also fear that something bad may happen to you or themselves. Some children and youth may experience sleep problems and have difficulty separating from you. With consistent support and nurturing, most of these reactions will dissipate within a short time.
- Contact the Children's Trust 211 Helpline for additional assistance.
- Consult with your pediatrician or a mental health professional if you are concerned about your child's reactions.

For further information you may contact the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Crisis Hotline at 305-995-2273.