

Dear Families & Friends,

Most of you are aware of the traumatic events that have recently occurred in our community...

The Knob Hill apartment fire in Okemos which destroyed the homes of 30+ families, suicide victim discovered by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at Cornell Elementary School, swatting (hoax) call reporting a shooting with fatalities at Okemos High School, and mass shooting at Michigan State University. These events have impacted all of us at some level.

Even if you have not been directly affected, just hearing about these situations can cause increased levels of stress and anxiety. And while everyone's reactions are different, it's normal to experience a range of emotions immediate, short term or even longer.

Many of us have developed healthy coping mechanisms and have access to helpful resources, but you might be wondering what you can do to support your kids. You can start by limiting their exposure to the television news which can be overwhelming and at the same time be careful what you discuss with others in their presence.

However, one of the best strategies is to talk your kids about what's happened and how they feel. *Keep in mind, if your children haven't already heard about these events, it's very likely they will soon.* You'll certainly want to keep your conversation and responses age-appropriate. And recognize you don't have to have all the answers. It's ok to say, "I don't know why this happened."

These ideas will get you headed in the right direction, but I've provided the links to an article from Focus on the Family, an excellent video from Back2Back Ministries & several other resources for additional suggestions.

Meanwhile, we're preparing our volunteers for interaction with your children on Sunday morning with these specific instructions. Volunteers and others should...

- Remember some children may not be aware of these events.
- Refrain from discussing these events where children might overhear.
- Keep responses to children's questions or comments short and age-appropriate.
- Avoid providing more information than necessary to answer questions or concerns
- Say things like... "That was scary and it's ok to be upset. We can talk to God about that anytime and He promises to help us."; "God gives us parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers, etc. to take care of us and help us feel better."; "Someone hurt people at MSU, but the police found him and he's dead. We can pray about that."; "Some people died and some are still in the hospital. We can pray about that."
- For elementary kids, use Bible concordance to discover what God says about fear, anger, etc.
- Ask for assistance from staff if needed.
- Staff will notify parent/guardian.
- Maintain focus on Bible lesson & activities as much as possible.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. And know that I'm praying for you, your kids, and our community.

Debbie Wright  
Children's Ministry Director  
New Hope Church

“Helping Children Cope Emotionally After Traumatic Events & Experiences” <https://www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/qa-helping-children-cope-after-traumatic-events>

“Healing Principles for Trauma” <https://back2back.org/healingprinciplesvideo/>

“Helping Children Face Trauma” <https://raisingchristiankids.com/helping-children-face-trauma-2/>

“Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic Event” [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//age\\_related\\_reactions\\_to\\_traumatic\\_events.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//age_related_reactions_to_traumatic_events.pdf)