



# Responding to a Campus Loss

## Suggestions for PARENTS

### What to KNOW . . .

<b>Common reactions to trauma may include</b>	<i>Shock/disbelief, anger or irritability, confusion, anxiety, fear, shame, sadness, denial, guilt, relief, apathy.</i>
<b>Your student may have a desire to talk about the traumatic event and they might not</b>	<i>Be sensitive to their needs.</i>
<b>It is normal</b>	<i>For your student to seek an explanation for the tragedy.</i>
<b>Be aware</b>	<i>That the effects of the tragedy can remain for an extended period of time.</i>
<b>Grief is a normal reaction</b>	<i>Unless you observe noticeable changes in your student's appearance, behaviors, and academic performance, encourage them to utilize their typical resources (normal diet, exercise routine, social support). Noticeable changes may signify a need for additional support, such as counseling.</i>
<b>It is important to keep yourself informed</b>	<i>Rely on published information</i>
<b>If your student was not directly impacted by the event, they may not feel affected by it, and that is okay</b>	<i>This may still allow an opportunity to discuss coping with loss.</i>
<b>Showing that you care goes a long way</b>	<i>Even if you feel that you are at a loss for words.</i>

### What to DO & SAY . . .

<b>Validate their varied responses to the trauma</b>	<i>The feelings you are having are understandable.</i>
<b>Make time to talk and stay in touch</b>	<i>"I'm here to listen if you need me."</i>
<b>Listen openly with acceptance, avoid judgment</b>	<i>Focus on your student's individualized experience of the event.</i>
<b>Allow time to adjust</b>	<i>It may take some time for your student to process the loss and cope with associated changes.</i>
<b>Assess their needs</b>	<i>"What help do you need right now?"</i>
<b>Avoid a focus on rumors</b>	<i>Refer to communication disclosed by the school for the most accurate information.</i>
<b>Initiate a conversation on grief and loss</b>	<i>What questions do you have about loss?</i>
<b>You don't need to have all the answers</b>	<i>"I don't know what to say, but I care."</i>

**Need further tips on how to support your student? Contact the W&M Counseling Center at: 757-221-3620**