

After The Shooting: How You Can Help

by Tamara Settle

Thank you to Anne Stewart and Lennis G. Echterling, Ph.D. for providing the following information. Please share this with others so that communities can grieve and heal.

All of us have been deeply affected by the tragic events that have taken place at **Sandy Hook Elementary School** in Newtown, Connecticut, USA. We have been shocked by the scenes of violence and our sense of security has been shaken. We worry about how the survivors are doing as they deal with heartache, grief, and anguish. Please keep in mind that you do not have to be in Connecticut to help during this painful time. No matter where you are, you can make a difference. Here are just a few of the ways that you can help:

Reach Out

Now is the time that you can reach out to others. Especially if you know people who have a connection to the community, you have an opportunity to comfort, reassure, and console. If they live near you, then you can lend an empathic ear to their concerns. If they are far away, you can give them a telephone call, send an email, or write a card. However you connect, you can offer emotional support to those who have been affected by the horrific event. You may be worried that you don't know what to say, but don't let that stop you from reaching out. There are no magic words or slogans, but you can make a difference by being there for others. They may forget your exact words, but they will remember your presence and compassion.

Take Heart

You have witnessed the violence and pain through the media. Be sure to also notice the many stories of resilience and sacrifice. Let yourself be inspired by the courage of those who risked their own lives to protect others. Allow yourself to be encouraged by the dedication of security officers and emergency medical teams who responded so unselfishly. Be touched by the many gestures of support that parents, teachers and friends have offered. It's essential that you acknowledge the heartache and suffering and don't lose heart about the future.

Make Meaning

The media have shown you a shocking story of random acts of violence of heartbreaking proportions. There is neither a simple nor logical explanation of the tragedy; however you can bring meaning by being a part of the healing process. You can acknowledge the depth of pain and offer your own random acts of kindness to help others to heal and be comforted. The senseless actions of one troubled individual have wreaked havoc and confusion. Your actions can help reaffirm our collective sense of meaning, trust and well being in life.

Give Thanks

During this painful time, it is especially important to give thanks to those who bring safety and security to your life. Of course, you have shown your appreciation to your friends and family for their kind touches. And you can make a deliberate effort to take every opportunity to thank such people as security personnel who work to protect our community, responders who help us survive medical emergencies, educators who have dedicated their lives to mentoring youth, and countless people who bring richness and joy to our lives.

Give Blood

Tragically, blood has been shed and you can donate life-giving blood as one concrete and important act of healing. Virtually all of us will face a time of great vulnerability in which we will need blood. And that time is all too often unexpected. To find out where you can donate, visit **American Red Cross** or call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543).

Make a Donation

One fast and practical way to make a positive difference is to contribute to local organizations that are dedicated to reduce all forms of violence in your community. Domestic violence shelters, organizations preventing child abuse, conflict mediation are just a few examples. You can donate your time, money and needed materials that support efforts to bring safety, peace and security to individuals and families.

Can you think of other ways to help?