

## Questions to Ask

**Parents and caregivers:** your presence, your listening ear, and your ongoing support are what will help children navigate their fear and begin to heal.

### **Middle School-Age Children (11–13 years old)**

*(More open-ended, allowing for reflection, validating their growing awareness)*

- + "What are kids at school saying about what happened?"
- + "How are you feeling when you hear the news or talk about it with friends?"
- + "Is there anything that feels confusing or hard to understand?"
- + "Do you ever feel nervous about being at school? What helps you when you do?"
- + "What do you do when you start to feel overwhelmed or scared?"
- + "How can I best support you right now, listening, spending time, or helping you with something?"

**Key Reminder:** With all ages, the goal isn't to "fix" their feelings right away. It's to listen patiently, validate their emotions, and remind them they are not alone.

## Responses to Give

Responses and statement that parents, caregivers, and youth workers can use in conversation with children.

### **Middle School-Age Children (11–13 years old)**

*(Recognize their growing awareness; validate their emotions and questions.)*

- + "I can see this news is upsetting. It's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused."
- + "Even though bad things happen, there are many people working to keep schools safe."
- + "You don't have to carry these feelings by yourself. I'm always here to listen."
- + "It's okay to not have all the answers right now, we can figure this out together."
- + "If things feel too heavy, let's find ways to take breaks, like going for a walk, listening to music, or spending time together."

**Key Reminder:** The goal is not to remove fear immediately. It's to help children feel heard, cared for, and reminded they are not alone. The tone should be calm, patient, and consistent.