

## 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.

### **Adolescents (14–18 years old)**

*(Respectful, validating, encouraging independence and coping strategies)*

- + "What are your thoughts about what happened?"
- + "How is this affecting you personally?"
- + "Do you feel like you can talk about this with friends, teachers, or me?"
- + "What do you do when the news feels overwhelming?"
- + "Do you ever feel pressure to 'be strong' when you don't want to?"
- + "What helps you feel most supported right now, privacy, conversation, or connection?"
- + "What gives you hope or helps you feel grounded when the world feels scary?"

**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 statements that parents, caregivers, and youth workers can use in conversation with children.

### **Adolescents (14–18 years old)**

*(Respect independence; be open, honest, and acknowledge their perspective.)*

- + "I know this is hard to process. How you're feeling is valid and important."
- + "It's okay if you're angry, sad, or numb. Everyone responds differently."
- + "Even though tragedies happen, schools and communities are working hard to make safety a top priority."
- + "You don't need to have it all figured out right now. Talking through it can help, and I'm here anytime you need me."
- + "If you want space, that's okay. If you want to talk, I'll listen, no judgment."
- + "If it ever feels overwhelming, we can also connect you with other supports, like a counselor or therapist."

**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.