



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 20, 2012

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LETTER TO JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMUNITY, VOLUNTEERS AND RESPONDERS

Our thoughts go out to the victims, families and entire community of Aurora. An event like this affects the entire community and can have a strong emotional impact. Normal responses to a difficult situation such as this are:

- Fear, uncertainty, apprehension, anxiety and worry
- Strong need for information, sometimes need for answers when they are not yet available
- Feeling irritable, tense, angry or resentful
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling “scattered” and unable to focus; difficulty making decisions
- Depressed, crying
- Feeling powerless

Things you can do to help:

- Reach out and talk to those who you trust and love for support --other family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, spiritual advisor.
- Explain the facts that you know about the situation to your child. Listen to your child, his/her fears and how he/she feels. Reassure your child often.
- Eat regular, nutritional meals – food low in fat, sodium and simple sugar. Your body uses up vitamin B, vitamin C and calcium during stress so increase your foods or vitamins to replenish.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol and caffeine – caffeine causes a stress response and it is not recommended when already under stress. Alcohol is a depressant and does not help you feel better.
- Remind yourself that the symptoms you or others are experiencing are ordinary reactions to an unordinary event. Realize that the stress response has a physical effect on you, and different people respond differently.
- Exercise and drink plenty of water. Get plenty of sleep.
- Simplify your plans. There is nothing more important right now than taking care of yourself and your loved ones.

Children and youth may have different ways of expressing their reactions and need some special help to cope.

The following are some suggestions for dealing with the child in crisis:

- Encourage children and teens to talk about their concerns and to express their feelings. Some children may be hesitant to initiate such conversation, so you may want to ask what your child has heard and how they feel about it.
- Explain the facts that you know about the event. Use simple, direct terms to describe what happened. Give factual information. You may have to explain more than once.
- Encourage children to talk about confusing feelings, worries, daydreams, and disruptions of concentration by accepting the feelings, listening carefully, and reminding them that these are normal reactions (any of these feelings are okay) following a very scary event.
- Reinforce safety and security. Let children know that tragic incidents are not common and that, day-to-day, schools are safe places. Your child needs a lot of reassurance that you will take care of him.
- Maintain family routines and activities. Help children get enough sleep and maintain a balanced diet.
- You may need to be flexible with bedtime routines. A child may need for you to stay with him while he falls asleep, he may want a night light, or to sleep with a sibling or with you.
- If your child is fearful of going to school, if counselors know when your child is in crisis, they can frequently help.
- Spend extra time with your children and your family. Hugs help!

If you are feeling overwhelmed, you may want to consider talking to a mental health professional who can help you develop an appropriate strategy for moving forward. It is important to get professional help if you feel like you are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living.

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About Jefferson Center for Mental Health

Celebrating its 55th year, Jefferson Center for Mental Health helps to bring hope for a brighter future to thousands of community members who struggle with mental health challenges. As the community's nonprofit mental health center, Jefferson Center serves people throughout Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek counties at over 20 locations, as well as schools, nursing homes, senior centers and other community settings. Last year Jefferson Center served more than 19,000 people in need. Center staff has expertise in numerous areas including children and family issues, adults with serious mental illness, suicide prevention, early intervention, juvenile justice, and trauma treatment. For more information about Jefferson Center, visit www.jcmh.org.