

Dear Families/Caregivers,

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network defines trauma as any frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to a one's life or body. Trauma disrupts a teenager's ability to learn, solve problems, and manage emotions. But research shows that the single most protective factor for teenagers who have experienced trauma is their relationship to a caring adult.

In this lesson students learned to identify the people who love and care for them. They learned to identify their needs, who can help them meet their needs, and how to ask for what they need. Students also learned the importance of supporting others meet their needs.

Here are some suggestions to help your teen understand the importance of connection and identifying the people who support them:

- Verbalize to your teen that you are there to keep them safe. Following a traumatic event, teens often need additional reassurance that the adults in their lives are available to help them through the difficult time. Remind them that they are a part of a family who loves and cares for them.
- Ask your teen to state their needs as they arise, as opposed to always meeting their needs before they ask. Ask your teen how they can get the need met. Sometimes the answer will be themselves. If they need help meeting a need, encourage them to ask for the help they need.
- Talk with your teen about the people who help them meet their needs. These people may include family members, friends, neighbors, school personnel, and other community members such as coaches, counselors, medical professionals, and emergency workers. Consider having your teen send a text or email to someone who has helped them to meet a need during this difficult time.
- Encourage your teen to help meet a need for someone else. This may be someone in your family, a friend, or others in the community. Consider volunteering with your teen at a food bank or shelter. Helping others helps teens to feel a sense of empowerment that they can make a difference.

Feeling connected is important following a traumatic event. Check in with your teen to make sure that they feel connected to others during this difficult time. If you are concerned about your teen's lack of support or connections, feel free to talk with me or our school administrator to determine ways to support your teen.