

Helping Students Cope After Ohio School Shooting

Tragedy has struck at another high school. One student was killed and four others injured in a Monday morning school shooting in Chardon, Ohio.

According to news reports, the suspect is thought to be a student at Chardon High School. The gunman opened fire with a handgun in the school cafeteria at 7:30 a.m., according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

“For the students, parents, faculty and community of Chardon High School, today will begin a long process of **healing**. Parents and teachers will need to model ways to handle the crisis through their ability to effectively manage their own emotions at this critical time,” says Dr. Beth Robinson is a licensed professional counselor who maintains a private practice working with abused and traumatized children.

Robinson says this morning’s shooting at Chardon High School reminds all of us how tragedy can change our lives in just a few moments. She suggests parents pay attention to meeting the emotional needs of their children following the shooting and related events.

“The most important thing for parents to do following a panic-inducing event such as this, is to remain calm and control their own emotions,” says Robinson, who is also the graduate director of Behavioral Sciences at Lubbock Christian University. “Parents will need to step back, temper the panic that is sure to rise and model ways to handle the crisis through their ability to manage their own emotions. Teenagers will take their emotional cues from their parents and peers. Parents need to avoid appearing anxious or frightened.”

As Robinson sees it, we need to pay close attention to how our

teens are reacting to the situation. Some signs that a teen is struggling to deal with the shooting may include changes in sleep patterns, activity patterns, and eating patterns. If these changes persist beyond a week or two, parents may want to discuss their child's reaction with a professional counselor.

"Children don't need a lot of 'things' right now. What they need are parents that will be physically present and emotionally available to them," Robinson says. "Young people are incredibly resilient and if this trauma is dealt with quickly and effectively, it helps eliminate the possibility that there will be trauma that manifests down the road in their adult years."