



Mass Shootings: Consoling a child or teen through times of terror

What happened in Las Vegas with the mass shooting is unbelievable. In today's world it is nearly impossible to shut off a child's fear-engendering exposure to media coverage of such tragic events. Because a person on the Autism spectrum is prone to perseveration, or getting stuck on something bothering them, excessive fears, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, and difficulty regulating emotions, news of such events can be traumatizing.

I met with a teen just yesterday who confided that they were now afraid to go to movie theaters, concerts, or really any public gatherings for fear that someone might open fire on them. How do you help someone overcome such a fear?

1. You can help them choose a mantra or affirmation for fear as a way to counter thoughts and feelings of terror. <http://intensivecareforyou.com/resources-for-free/> has a list of "Affirmations to Calm Fear" to give some examples and ideas.
2. Encourage self-care through the adoption of healthy habits, such as exercising in the morning, which restores and maintains feelings of well-being and the brain chemistry that promotes happiness.
3. Be open to discussing the problem with them and allowing them to feel and think the way they do. Don't just tell them they shouldn't feel that way.
4. Let them know that you are taking care of them, and the chances of them becoming a target in a public place is very, very low.
5. Limit media exposure.
6. Review how our elected officials and helpers such as police are working to make our world safer and prevent these things from happening again.
7. Maintain normal routines.
8. Review safety procedures at home and school, such as helping them identify at least one person in each setting that they trust and can go to for support.
9. Keep an eye on their emotional state and take them for professional counseling if their normal life continues to be disrupted by their fears.
10. Take care of yourself and model bravery by not giving in to fears yourself.