



Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

When Your Child Says.....

FOR FT HOOD PARENTS

Talking with your child when questions come up on the Ft Hood disaster can be confusing and of concern as you want to say what your child needs to hear and at the same time not tell them too much, nor too little. You want to help your child's worries become less and their sense of the safety at home and with your family be strong. It is often helpful to see some actual examples to use for questions your child may ask.

Below are some examples of how to respond to your children's specific comments or questions about the Ft. Hood shootings: .."When your child says..... you may say....."

"Mommy, I'm scared."

Of course you're scared. That's OK. I get scared too sometimes. But we need to remember that things like this almost never happen. What helps us not to be scared anymore is that what happened is now over. The person who did this is no longer here. People in charge (policemen, commanders, etc.) are making sure that nothing like this happens again. It may take you a little time to not feel scared anymore. That's OK, too. When you do feel scared or worried, it's OK to come to me to talk or just to get a hug. You know you can always ask me any question that you want and I'll try to answer it as best as I can.

"What happened, I don't understand Mommy? Why are you sad?"

Sure, we can talk about that, but first – tell me what you heard and what you know. (allow the child to share what he/she knows. Acknowledge information and clarify misunderstanding.)

We still don't know everything about what happened. But, we are learning more. What I know is a man went into a building with many soldiers and started hurting some of them. Some of the soldiers were so hurt that they died. The man was caught and now everyone is safe. But, more happened than just that. So many people acted so bravely to help. They used what they have learned to help those that the man hurt. It helps us remember that even when something bad like this happens, there are so many people who want to help. (older children and teens may want

more information/details about what happened. Parents should share the amount of information that is appropriate to their developmental age.)

“Why did he do that, Mom?”

That’s a really good question and I wish I could give you a good answer, but we don’t know right now. It can be hard not to know why. We can’t always know why people do wrong things or bad things. But, we always need to remember that something like this almost never happens. Day to day, there will always be many, many more people who want to do something nice or helpful. Even when something bad or scary happens, we can see that there are so many who want to help and it’s great that we can count on them.

“Will it happen again, Daddy?”

Things like this almost never happen. Ft. Hood is a place where we have always felt safe. We know that people are taking good care of us here. We have policemen and women, commanders, great schools and doctors all working hard to keep our community strong. But we have even more than that – we have neighbors and friends who step in to help out - people we can count on. They care about us and we care about them. I always think about those heroes who tried so hard and helped the people that were hurt. Ft. Hood is a place where people take care of each other. Who do you have you can count on?

**Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
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CSTS is the academic arm and a partnering Center of the Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.