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Tips for Coping with the VA Tech Tragedy

To guide discussions about the Virginia Tech shooting, Mental Health America offers the following suggestions for teachers and parents as they communicate with young people across the nation:

- Talk honestly about the incident, without graphic detail, and share some of your own feelings about it. It is important that students feel informed.
- Encourage students to talk about their concerns and to express their feelings, and validate the young person's feelings and concerns.
- Limit television viewing. It can be difficult for to process the images and messages in news reports.
- Empower young people to take action about their own school safety. Encourage them to share their concerns about school safety with university officials.
- Recognize what may be behind a young person's behavior. They may minimize their concerns outwardly, but may become argumentative, withdrawn or allow their school performance to decline.
- Keep the dialogue going even after media coverage subsides. Continue to talk about feelings and discuss actions being taken to make schools and communities safer.
- Seek help when necessary. If you are worried about a young person's reaction or have ongoing concerns about his/her behavior or emotions, contact a mental health professional at their school or at your community mental health center. Your local Mental Health America Affiliate can direct you to resources in your community.