WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal



Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting



Reassure them that they are safe



Don’t tell them that they are “lucky it wasn’t worse”. People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them



Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time



Don’t take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, taking exercise, or talking



Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling



When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back If you are out for a long time, telephone and reassure them



Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it



If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen



Work with the school support services and other available services



As well as advising your child about appropriate use of social media, monitor their use, particularly during this vulnerable time. Useful website: www.webwise.ie