When A Crisis Happens On Campus

Ways Family Members Can Be Helpful

In view of the recent crisis impacting our campus, we want to ensure that family members are as informed as possible in order to best offer support to sons and daughters attending Duke University. As a family member or parent, you may be feeling a range of emotions or reactions when your son or daughter is exposed to a traumatic event. Feelings such as confusion, guilt, helplessness, blame and anger are common reactions for parents. For this reason, it’s important that you, as parents, seek support and discuss your feelings before reaching out to your son or daughter. When you are ready to contact and support your son or daughter, you will be more grounded and able to be more present for your child as they recover from this crisis.

Sometimes students may refrain for seeking support because they feel “weak” or embarrassed, or they fear burdening others or are concerned that others may judge their reactions. Perhaps a student is unsure about his/her needs or would like to avoid thinking about the event. Or, a student may be unsure where to obtain assistance or doubt that help is possible. Try to remember that healing takes time and pushing someone to talk about the incident before they are ready can be harmful. Keep in mind that listening can be painful, but if done in a respectful way without judgments, listening can allow a person to work through their reactions to an event. The following are some helpful suggestions to consider when approaching your son or daughter.

- Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk and to be a supportive listener,
- Focus on listening and ask how you can help while trying not to “fix” the situation.
- Reassure your son or daughter that they are now safe.
- Try not to be over-protective and encourage your loved one to return to his/her routine.
- Encourage help-seeking and/or encourage him/her to offer help to others.
- Acknowledge that this type of stress often takes time and help brainstorm positive ways to deal with the reactions,
- Be patient, offer to spend additional time together if needed,
- Encourage your loved one or friend to seek additional support if needed
  - Counseling and Psychological Services
  - Dean of Students (with Dean-on-Call service)
  - Office of Religious Life
  - Office of Residence Life and Housing (with Resident Counselor on call service)

Comfort offered to a loved one by providing extra love and attention can instill a sense of security and trust. Connecting with them and helping them to connect with resources can also build that trust, leading to a healthy healing and recovery from the crisis that has been so disruptive.

Remember, you can also utilize our resources if you need additional consultation.