



How to respond after a gun tragedy in your community

Gun violence has a powerful effect on communities throughout the United States. It affects not only those injured and killed by guns but also their friends and families, who live with the emotional repercussions. In some communities with higher rates of gun violence, people may live with the constant fear that community gun violence will affect them or someone they love.

Gun injuries are the #1 cause of death for kids and teens, so these fears are understandable. If you're concerned about gun violence, one way to cope is by talking about your fears and concerns with others in your community.

After a gun tragedy in your community, connect with others

It can be especially frightening when an act of gun violence occurs near you or is directed at a group of people you identify with. In situations like these, other people in your community can be a valuable source of support. You can help each other process what happened and share resources through conversation.

"Can we talk about what happened?"

"Remember that you aren't alone. We can help each other through this."

"I'm so sad that this happened in our community. If you want to talk, I'm here for you."

Why this works

Talking with others can help you process your pain, and it may inspire you to take action together to make the community safer.

Find common ground

When a community is affected by gun violence, it's normal for the people in that community to feel fear, anger, and other strong emotions. But it's easier for people to communicate and listen to each other when they are calm. If a conversation feels too emotional, try to find something everyone can agree on. When talking about community violence, you might say something like:

"We all want to feel safe in our community."

"I love this community, and I hope we can work together to make it safer for everyone."

"It means a lot to me to see people coming together to support each other."

Why this works

Focusing on what you have in common will help you both feel more at ease so you can really listen to and understand each other.

After the chat

- If others ask questions you aren't sure how to answer, let them know you will try to find answers and get back to them. [Check our resources page to learn more at AgreeToAgree.org/Resources.](https://www.agreetoagree.org/Resources)

After the chat

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- Continue to educate yourself and others. Check reliable sources to learn the facts on gun violence in your community.
 - Connect with local organizations working to prevent gun violence and support those affected, and learn how you can collaborate with them.
 - Know the local gun laws.
 - Learn about strategies that help to reduce gun violence, including safe gun storage and taking action if you recognize that someone is in crisis and may have access to a gun.
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Tips for having productive conversations

- If someone has lost a friend or family member to gun violence, avoid saying, "I understand what you're going through," because everyone's pain is different. Instead, offer support. "I'm here for you."
- Remember that everyone's thoughts, feelings, and experiences matter. No matter how someone feels about gun ownership or secure gun storage, listening to their perspective is important.
- Stay calm. Emotions can escalate the conversation and make it harder for people to understand each other.

**If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis,
call or text 988 to be connected with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.**

Learn how to have the conversation at AgreeToAgree.org

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