

## *Validating Responses*

- “That is a typical reaction....”
- “That is not uncommon...”
- “That is understandable”
- “That is a common reaction to a not so common event”
- “It’s not the first time that I have heard that...”
- “That is a natural instinct for a parent...”
- “At times like this we may have more questions than we have answers”
- “I can’t begin to imagine”
- “I have no words”
- “Absolutely”
- “I’m sorry”
- “I can’t imagine how upset you must have been.”
- “Anger is not uncommon. Some people even talk of being outraged or furious when they are so distressed.”
- “Fear is not unusual. Many people are terrorized when they think their lives or someone they love is threatened.”
- “Everyday life is shattered by senseless murder.”
- “I’m not sure anyone can fully understand how much agony this disaster has caused you and your family.”
- “Pain is a common bond in disaster, but its experience can’t really be shared.”
- “It can be terribly frustrating not to know what happened.”
- “It must be very difficult to believe yourself to be to blame for this tragedy. It’s not unusual for us to think back on ways that we could have avoided a disaster, but you are not responsible for the behavior of a murderer.”
- “Some people are ashamed and humiliated when they are helpless to prevent or respond to tragedy. But tragedy often makes people helpless and you didn’t have any control over what happened.”
- “Disasters like this don’t make sense.”
- “It is difficult to comprehend anything as terrible as what happened to you.”
- “Sometimes it’s hard to put words to an awful event. Tears can serve as a useful alternative.”
- “Take your time. It’s alright to cry after someone you love has been killed.”
- “It’s not unusual to feel like a little child or baby when something this awful overwhelms you.”
- “It’s very difficult to think you will ever feel good again when such a bad thing has happened to you.”

● *Effective Words & Questions*

Not	Yes
Feelings	Reactions (adults)
Sharing	Telling / Explaining
Understand	Understandable
Victim / Survivor	Self define
Sorry about the “tragedy”	Sorry about...(specific event)
Being distracted	Nodding and eye contact
Repeating / Parroting	Using different validations

*Phrases to Avoid*

- I understand
- Don't feel bad
- You're strong
- You're lucky that...
- You'll get through this
- Don't cry
- Its God's will
- It could be worse
- At least you still have...