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APA Offers Condolences to the Virginia Tech Community

Arlington, Va. – The American Psychiatric Association (APA) expresses its deepest sympathies to the families, friends and peers of the victims of the shocking school shooting tragedy at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. This appalling event at Virginia Tech is a vivid reminder that random violence is an ongoing problem in our nation.

The effects of this type of trauma can have tremendous psychological impacts on those affected. Affected individuals may have various stress reactions that present psychological, as well as physical symptoms. The causes behind such incidents are often complex, and there are usually no simple answers.

After a traumatic event has passed, the APA recommends following these steps:

1. Keep informed about new information and developments, but avoid overexposure to news rebroadcasts of the event. Be sure to use credible information sources to avoid speculation and rumors.
2. If you feel anxious, angry or depressed, you are not alone. Talk to friends, family or peers who likely are experiencing the same feelings.
3. If you have contact with children, keep open dialogues with them regarding their fears of danger. Let them know that, with time, healing from a tragedy is possible, even hoped for. Don't minimize the dangers, but talk about your ability to cope with tragedy and get through the ordeal.
4. Feelings of anxiety and depression following a traumatic event are natural. If these symptoms continue, even after order has been restored, or if these feelings begin to overwhelm you, seek the advice of a psychiatric physician in your local community. For more information on coping with mental illnesses, visit the APA's consumer Web site: www.HealthyMinds.org.

For additional information regarding trauma and disasters, visit the APA's Disaster Psychiatry Web site at <http://www.psych.org/disasterpsych/>.

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About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.