

Helping Children and Families Cope After a Traumatic Event



Talking to Kids about Traumatic Events

- ◆ Let kids know you are there to listen
- ◆ Keep your voice calm
- ◆ Reassure children that they will be safe
- ◆ Don't minimize the child's feelings, as in "Stop being a baby, don't cry."
- ◆ Follow the child's lead
- ◆ If the child wants to talk, listen
- ◆ If the child wants to be held, do so
- ◆ If the child is clingy, be patient
- ◆ Allow children to show their fears; give support
- ◆ Help children identify their feelings

Even if it is difficult for the adult who also may be traumatized, it is important for the child to be able to feel safe. Younger children tend to think that the world revolves around them. So they might be afraid that something they thought or did caused bad things to happen.



When Children are Exposed to a Traumatic Event:

- ⇒ They depend on adults
- ⇒ They depend on protection
- ⇒ They depend on adults hearing their concerns.
- ⇒ They depend on support

Reactions To Traumas:

- ⇒ Fear of being separated
- ⇒ Crying, whimpering, screaming
- ⇒ Frightened facial expressions
- ⇒ Disruptive behavior
- ⇒ Refusal to attend school

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How Can Parents and Other Traumatized Adults Help Themselves?

It's very important that adults help themselves when they are traumatized and engage in self care. If they are also parents, getting support and assistance will be particularly important as they will be better able to listen to their children and give them the understanding and support they need to heal.



What Adults Can Do:

- * Return to day-to-day structure (routines) as soon as possible
- * Seek out support from friends and colleagues
- * Keep a journal
- * Participate in activities that may distract you or feel good to you
- * Try to be patient with others who are also under stress
- * Give yourself permission to feel moody, nervous, or blue
- * Try not to make any major life changes during a stressful time
- * Make as many daily decisions as possible to have a feeling of control over your life
- * Try to rest and eat balanced and regular meals