

Helping Children Cope with Trauma

After any disaster, children are most afraid that the event will recur, that they or someone they love will be hurt or killed, that they may be separated from those they love and be left alone. Here are ways that you can help children cope with trauma:

- 1) Allow children to express their feelings about what has happened and share your feelings with them.
- 2) Reassure children that they are safe and that they are loved.
- 3) Be honest with children about what has occurred and provide facts about what happened. Children usually know when something is being sugar-coated.
- 4) Help children return to as normal a routine as possible.
- 5) Spend extra time with your child, especially doing something fun or relaxing for both of you.
- 6) Remember the importance of touch. A hug can reassure children that they are loved.
- 7) Review family safety procedures so children will feel prepared the next time an emergency situation occurs.
- 8) Talk with teachers, baby-sitters, daycare providers and others who may be with children so they understand how the child has been affected.
- 9) Watch for signs of repetitive play in which children re-enact all or part of the disaster.
- 10) Praise and recognize responsible behavior and reassure children that their feelings are normal in response to an abnormal situation.

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