

VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND TRAUMA RECOVERY

Helping young people avoid or overcome emotional problems in the wake of violence or disaster is one of the most important challenges a parent can face. Moreover, children often face violence in their own homes.

Most children recover within a few weeks. Some need help longer. Grief (a deep emotional response to loss) may take months to resolve. It could be for a loved one. It could be for a friend or pet.

IDENTIFY CHILDREN WHO:

- Refuse to go places that remind them of a particular event
- Seem numb emotionally
- Show little emotional reaction after a traumatic experience
- Behave dangerously

ADULTS SHOULD:

- Attend to children
 - Listen to them
 - Accept/do not argue about their feelings

AFTER VIOLENCE OR A DISASTER PARENTS SHOULD:

- Identify and address their own feelings — this will allow them to help others
- Explain to children what happened
- Let children know:
 - You love them
 - The event was not their fault
 - You will take care of them
- **DO:**
 - Allow children to cry
 - Allow sadness
 - Let children talk about feelings
- **DON'T:**
 - Expect children to be brave or tough
 - Make children discuss the event before they are ready
 - Get angry if children show strong emotions
 - Get upset if they begin:
 - Bed-wetting
 - Acting out
 - Thumb-sucking

- If children have trouble sleeping:
 - Give them extra attention
- Try to keep normal routines:
 - Bed-time stories
 - Eating dinner together
 - Watching TV together
- If you can't keep normal routines, make new ones together

Some symptoms may require immediate attention. Contact a mental health professional if these symptoms occur:

- Flashbacks
- Racing heart and sweating
- Being emotionally numb
- Being very sad or depressed
- Thoughts or actions to end life



Helping children and young people to overcome traumatic experiences requires love and understanding from their parents and the community

