

How to Help

Reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time. Very young children need a lot of cuddling, as well as verbal support. Answer questions about the event honestly, but do not dwell on frightening details or allow the subject to dominate family or classroom time indefinitely. Encourage children of all ages to express emotions through conversation, writing, or artwork and to find a way to help others who were affected by the event.

Try to maintain a normal household or classroom routine, and encourage children to participate in recreational activity. Temporarily reduce your expectations about performance in school or at home, perhaps by substituting less demanding responsibilities for normal chores.

Acknowledge that you, too, may have reactions associated with the traumatic event, and take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing.

Tips for Talking to Children After a Traumatic Event

Provide children with opportunities to talk about what they are seeing on television and to ask questions.

Do not be afraid to admit that you cannot answer all of their questions.

Answer questions at a level the child can understand.

Provide ongoing opportunities for children to talk. They probably will have more questions as time goes on.

Use this as an opportunity to establish a family emergency plan. Feeling that there is something you can do may be very comforting to both children and adults.

Allow children to discuss other fears and concerns about unrelated issues. This is a good opportunity to explore these issues also.

Monitor children's television watching. Some parents may wish to limit their child's exposure to graphic or troubling scenes. To the extent possible, be present when your child is watching news coverage of the event. It is at these times that questions might arise.

