

Suggestions for Parents of Traumatized Children

Listen to and tolerate child's retelling of event.

Respect child's fears; give child time to cope with fears.

Increase monitoring and awareness of child's play, which may involve secretive reenactments of trauma with peers and siblings; set limits on scary or hurtful play.

Permit child to try out new ideas to cope with fearfulness at bedtime: extra reading time, radio on, listening to a tape in the middle of the night to undo the residue of fear from a nightmare.

Reassure the older child that feelings of fear or behaviours that feel out of control or seem babyish (e.g. night wetting) are normal after a frightening experience and that the child will feel more like himself or herself with time.

Encourage child to talk about confusing feelings, worries, daydreams, mental review of traumatic images, and disruptions of concentration by accepting the feelings, listening carefully, and reminding child that these are normal reactions following a very scary event.

Maintain communication with school staff and monitor child's coping with demands at school or in community activities.

Expect some time-limited decrease in child's school performance and help the child to accept this as a temporary result of the trauma.



Protect the child from reexposure to frightening situations and reminders of trauma, including scary television programs, movies, stories, and physical or locational reminders of trauma.

Expect and understand child's regressions while maintaining basic household rules.

Expect some difficult or uncharacteristic behaviour.

Listen for a child's misunderstandings of traumatic event, particularly those that involve self-blame and magical thinking.

Gently help child develop a realistic understand of event.

Remain aware of your own reactions to the child's trauma.

Provide reassurance to child that upsetting feelings will diminish over time.

Provide opportunities for child to experience control and make choices in daily activities.

Be mindful of the possibility of anniversary reactions.