



THINGS FAMILIES CAN DO TO COPE WITH TRAUMA

When traumatic event(s) happen, it is common to have unsettling feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Below are some ideas for coping.

- Traumatic events can cause significant stress. It can make it difficult to think clearly. Try to take some deep, slow breaths. This will help you think more clearly and help those around you.
- Reassure young children that they are safe. Tell them in simple words that some bad things are happening in the community and world but that they are safe right now.
- Answer questions in simple and honest ways if asked. Do not volunteer a lot of information. It is okay to say you do not know.
- Keep young children (under 8 years old) away from graphic images of violence. For older children, monitor exposure to graphic images. These can cause more distress. Imagining what victims experienced can also cause distress.
- For younger children, try to keep to normal family routines, at bedtime, meals, and activities.
- Give older children and teens opportunities to express reactions to the traumatic event by encouraging them to talk about how they are feeling, why they think these acts happened, and what they think should be done.
- Avoid guessing beyond facts to more frightening ideas. Acknowledge feelings of anger or desire for revenge, but do not encourage them. Expressing a lot of anger tends to make people more angry and upset.
- It can be helpful to talk about what happened and your feelings. Taking a break from talking about it and focusing on other things can also be okay and helpful.
- Try to keep a perspective. It is important to remember that despite the horror of these acts, people in the community have learned to live meaningful and mostly safe lives even with the threat of violence. Highlight the efforts that have been made to help the community be safer.
- People cope with crisis differently. Try to accept others' individual coping styles. Do not pressure family members to cope by talking about it or by getting on with things. Both types of coping can work. However, most people find talking with others helpful.
- Check in and stay close to family and friends. This is almost always a comfort to people.
- Big traumatic events can bring up memories of past personal trauma. Be aware that this can happen and, if needed, seek help.
- If you feel a need to be with members of your community, contact your local community organizations. Many of them will have events or will have someone who can assist you.
- Many people want to help. If feelings become overwhelming, seek professional help.