

How Parents and Other Caring Adults Can Help

- * Be available to listen. Let your child talk without passing judgment. Let children know their feelings are normal.
- * Stay physically close. Children may need extra hugs and reassurances of love as they recover from trauma.
- * Honor children's privacy. Let children take time to figure things out and express their feelings. Don't force them to talk.
- * Assure children they are safe. Tell them about the safety steps being taken, and ask about their safety concerns.
- * Spend extra time together. Plan family activities that everyone enjoys and let your children know you are there for them.
- * Establish positive routines and go back to former routines as soon as possible.
- * Limit or avoid TV viewing of the tragedy. Seeing the event replayed may re-traumatize your child.
- * Give children a sense of control over their lives. For example, let them decide what to wear or what to have for dinner.
- * Keep children healthy. Make sure your children are getting rest and good nutrition.
- * Communicate with the teacher. Parents and teachers should work together to make sure children are recovering from the trauma.
- * Take advantage of mental health resources. Don't be afraid to ask for professional help for your children and yourself.
- * Group Crisis Intervention: Trained crisis responders work with groups to help process traumas. The victims articulate what they felt, saw, heard, tasted, smelled and touched during the trauma. The goals are to increase safety and security, fulfill the need to retell their experiences and help identify ways to face the future.
- * Respond to specific symptoms:
 - Guilt. Explain what is controllable and encourage children to talk positively about themselves.

Helplessness. Ask the child to write or speak about feelings and record pleasant thoughts.

Apathy or depression. Plan enjoyable activities; talk about the future.

Agitation. Teach relaxation techniques. Encourage physical exercise.

Loss of appetite. Don't force eating. Prepare favorite meals.

Sleep difficulties. Keep a regular bedtime and engage in relaxing activities in the evening.

Fear. Be available, supportive and reassuring.

Aggressive behavior. Use a firm approach to let the child know that the behavior is unacceptable. Explain that the feelings of anger are normal and encourage the child to express emotions in appropriate ways.

*Activities for Children

Encourage children to draw pictures that express their feelings.

Write a story about the event and end on a positive note.

Use art and music to relieve stress.

Play dress-up and pretend to be adults.

Use puppets to create a skit.

Read stories together.

National Educational Association Health Information Network, www.neahin.org/crisisguide, 2007.