

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S REACTIONS AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

When a child or young person experiences a traumatic incident it can be very upsetting for them and for you. Even though the event is over your child may still be experiencing reactions to it. It is normal for children and young people to be upset after such a happening. It is unlikely that they have experienced such an event before and so their reaction may be challenging for you.

Their reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Reassurance, understanding and support from you, along with their teachers and their friends can help them to cope.

Here are some common reactions to a traumatic incident. You might have noticed some of these.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Confused Nightmares/bad dreams Poor concentration Restless Not interested in what is going on Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened Thinking that they cannot cope	Worried Guilty Anxious Fearful Easily upset Cross Panicky Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Loss of appetite Being very quiet Nervous Being quarrelsome/arguing	Feeling tired all the time Unable to rest or settle Feeling sick/knot in tummy Cold and shivery

REMEMBER

1. These are normal reactions.
2. The reactions should lessen in time normally over the next few weeks.
3. If you continue to have concerns some more specialist help may be needed. Talk to your doctor about this.



HELPING YOUR CHILD

It is important that you are strong enough to bear whatever your child wants to talk about and to answer their questions.

DO	DO NOT
Take time to listen and answer questions.	Try to hide your own sadness or grief but try not to overwhelm them with such.
Be honest in your explanations and in showing your own sadness or grief.	Tell your child not to worry or be sad. They cannot control their feelings.
Let them know their feelings are important.	Feel like you have to have all the answers or get it right all the time.
Give plenty of reassurance and affection. Let them know you love them and will be there for them.	Be surprised at your child's ability to set grief aside and alternate between sadness and happiness. Time with friends and playmates enables them to release anxiety about incidents over which they have no control.
Keep to routines and patterns as much as possible.	
Be aware that changes such as clinging or aggressive behaviour or physical problems may be an expression of grief.	
Take things one day at a time.	

