

How to help your child



Listen to the child

Let the child talk about their experiences, thoughts and feelings, even the difficult ones



Create some daily routines

and fixed times for meals, bedtime and so on



Play with the child

Many children process distressing experiences through play



Be patient

Children may need to talk about the same thing again and again

Contact a social worker, school teacher, school nurse or health centre, if you find that things are getting too difficult or the traumas are getting worse.



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How to help children cope with trauma

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You are important

Mum and Dad are the most important people in a child's life, especially when children need help to process traumatic experiences. Once you know how traumatic experiences affect children, it is easier to understand their feelings and behaviour and easier to help them.

A normal reaction

The brain reacts to distressing experiences by producing stress hormones, which put the body into a state of alert. This helps us to think quickly and move quickly, so we can survive life-threatening situations.

If an experience is very intense and long-lasting, the brain, and sometimes the body, stays in a state of alert, even when the life-threatening situation is over.

Seeking support

Parents can also experience traumatic events that can negatively affect their well-being. Symptoms of trauma can be passed from parents to their children and can impact children even if they haven't directly experienced the distressing situation. It's important to seek help and talk to someone about your experiences.

Talk to the child

Many parents exclude children from adult conversations about distressing experiences and difficult emotions. By doing so, parents believe they are protecting their children. However, children sense much more than adults are aware of, especially when something is wrong. They become curious and concerned when something is kept secret from them.

Therefore, it is better to talk to children about both your and their experiences and emotions, carefully choosing your words based on the child's age and level of understanding to ensure the explanation is appropriate and supportive.



Traumatic events

Trauma is a normal reaction to abnormal events:

- The disappearance, death or injury of a parent or close family member
- Physical injury
- Experiencing war
- Witnessing violence or threats
- Fleeing from one's home and country
- Long absence from one's family
- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse

Children's reactions

Children react in various ways to traumas. Common reactions include:

- Difficulty concentrating and learning new things
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Physical complaints such as stomach ache, headache, dizziness, nausea
- Sadness and isolation
- Anxiety and fear
- Monotonous or exaggerated play
- Restless and fidgety
- Crying a lot, shouting a lot
- Clinging to their parents
- Difficulty falling asleep or waking up at night
- Recurring nightmares
- Fear of the dark
- Fear of loud noises
- Fear of being alone