



# 5-minute safety talk

## Coping with Stress

Traumatic events affect different people in different ways. People who experience them can have physical reactions, such as cuts and bruises, as well as mental reactions, such as frightening thoughts and painful feelings. Common responses can include:

- Feeling a sense of loss, sadness, frustration, helplessness, or emotional numbness
- Experiencing troubling memories from that day
- Having nightmares or difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Having no desire for food or a loss of appetite
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling nervous or on edge

If you or someone you know experiences any of these feelings after a traumatic event, get support from your family, friends, and coworkers. Talk with others about your feelings and take care of yourself by keeping your normal routine. Avoid using alcohol and drugs. Stay active: helping other people or volunteering in your community can help you feel better.

Keep in mind that returning to the way you felt before the event may take some time. Helping and healing can begin at the scene of the event, but may need to continue over a period of time. If your distress continues or you have trouble managing your feelings, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.

### Tips for parents

It's natural for children to worry. But talking with children about traumatic events, and what they watch or hear about them, can help put frightening information into a more balanced context. Use these suggestions to help children through their questions:

1. **Reach out and talk.** Create opportunities to have children talk, but do not force them. Try asking questions like, what do you think about these events, or how do you think these things happen? After a traumatic event, it is important for children to feel like they can share their feelings and to know that their fears and anxieties are understandable.
2. **Express yourself.** Children may be feeling different emotions at different times. Sadness. Anger. Fear. Confusion. These feelings are normal reactions to a traumatic event. Don't be afraid to allow children to express how they feel, and share your feelings with them.
3. **Watch and listen.** Be alert for any change in behavior. Are the children sleeping more or less? Are they withdrawing from friends or family? Is their behavior out of the ordinary? This may show that they are having trouble coming to terms with the event. Recognizing even small changes in behavior can give you an early warning that something is troubling them.
4. **Share information with others.** Make an on-going effort to check in and talk to other parents about any issues or stress. You

don't have to deal with problems alone. The most effective solutions usually come from parents, schools, and health professionals working together to provide support for the health and well-being of the children.

5. **Maintain normal routines.** Keep a regular schedule. This can be reassuring and promote a sense of stability and safety. Encourage children to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.
6. **Keep it going.** Ask children how they feel about the event in a week, then in a month, and so on. Each child has his or her own way of coping under stressful situations. The best thing you can do as a parent is to listen to each child and allow them to express their concerns and fears.

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