

Trauma and your children

for parents or guardians after disaster or traumatic events

Your child needs you. Children who have recently experienced trauma are likely to show signs of distress. Be assured that it is normal for them to display a wide range of physical or emotional reactions after a sudden disturbing event. It is hard for them to understand what has happened. Some may have mixed-up views of the situation, while others may have a clearer understanding. How you help your child work through this difficult time may have a lasting effect. Children may experience the same strong feelings you have about the traumatic event. Children from the same family may react differently.

Your children may:

- Worry about what will happen to them.
- Show they are angry by hitting, kicking, throwing things.
- Be more active or restless.
- Be afraid to be alone or sleep alone. They may have bad dreams.
- Be afraid it will happen again or afraid of loud noises.
- Behave like they did when they were younger: want a bottle, suck their thumb, wet the bed.
- Be upset at the loss of a favorite blanket or toy.
- Have symptoms of being sick, such as stomachache, nausea, headache.
- Become quiet and shy.
- Feel like you are not paying enough attention to them.
- Seem normal for a while, and then months later, show signs of stress.

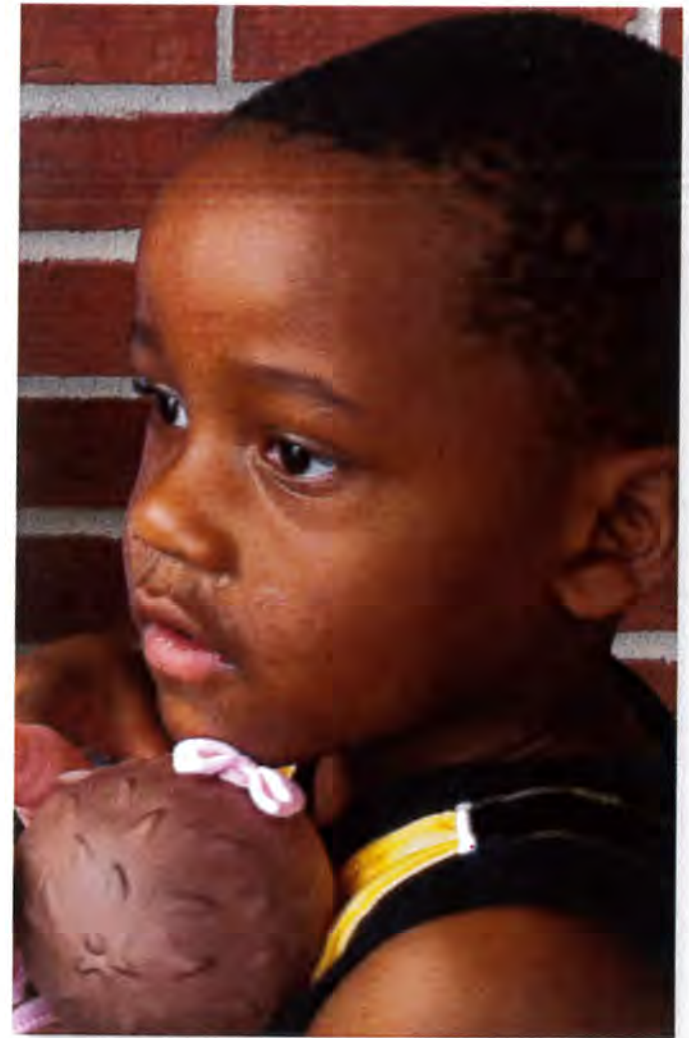


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Help your children cope:

- Know that this is a difficult time for them and for you also. They can tell that you are under stress. Talk about your own feelings without overwhelming them.
- Talk with them about the experience. Be patient. Give simple, accurate information about the situation.
- Listen to what your children say with your ears and your heart. Share what you heard, “It sounds like you are afraid that. . .” or “You wonder if this will happen again.”
- Reassure your children. “We are together. We are safe now.”
- Hold and cuddle your child. Gentle touch gives comfort and security.
- Allow children time to grieve the loss they have experienced. In time it may be helpful to replace a special lost object.
- Spend extra time with them, such as reading a book, playing a game, and sharing a calm bedtime routine. Remind them that you are close by.
- Observe your child at play. What are they sharing through their play?
- Provide meaningful play materials and experiences when possible, which help children work through their feelings, such as drawing, painting, a tub of water, a ball or bean bag, blocks, puzzles, dolls or puppets.
- Ask for help if needed from a pastor, doctor, school counselor.
- Look for the helpers in your community and situation. It provides hope.



**May you and your children feel support and healing
as you cope with these difficult times.**

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