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## **How to Help Children and Adolescents Cope With Stressful Situations and Traumatic Events**

A child's and adolescent ability to cope with disaster, emergencies or traumatic events is often tied to the way parents cope. They can detect adults' fears and sadness. Parents and adults can make these situations less traumatic for children by taking steps to manage their own feelings and plans for coping. Parents are almost always the best source of support for children. One way to establish a sense of control and to build confidence is to discuss the event and let them know that you will do your best to keep them safe.

It is important that you decrease the child and adolescent's ability to watch the traumatic event. The media will continuously play and replay what has happened. The more a person watches it will create anger, fear, anxiety, and sometimes depression. Ask you teenager not to replay the incidents on social media. Don't act as if nothing has occurred, talk to your child. Below are a few talking points.

### **Meeting the Child's Emotional Needs.**

1. Adults should encourage children and adolescents to share their thoughts and feelings about the incident.
2. Clarify misunderstandings about risk and danger by listening to children's concerns and answering questions.

3. Maintain a sense of calm by validating children's concerns and perceptions and with discussion of concrete plans for safety. Listen to what the child is saying. If a young child is asking questions about the event, answer them simply without the elaboration needed for an older child or adult.
4. Some children are comforted by knowing more or less information than others; decide what level of information your particular child needs.
5. If a child has difficulty expressing feelings, encourage the child to draw a picture or tell a story about the fear.

Try to understand what is causing anxieties and fears. Be aware that following a traumatic event, children are most afraid that:

- The event will happen again.
- Someone close to them will be killed or injured.
- They will be left alone or separated from the family.

Seek professional help if you feel your child is having difficulty adjusting or you notice a change in their behavior.