

Looking after yourself

It is important that you take care of yourself; this will help you to support your child.



- **Ask for support.** Tell people what you need and share your feelings with people you trust.
- **Get rest.** Take time out to get sufficient sleep (your normal amount).
- **Remember to eat.**
- **Take breaks.** Some time away from your child will calm you and renew your energy.
- **Take time to go over your own feelings.** Your child can tell when you are worried or upset.

Other children in the family may need help and more reassurance than usual. Checking in with them and giving them the opportunity to talk can be important.

Where can I find more help?

If you have any concerns about your child, please speak to your medical team or your GP. If problems continue for more than 1 month after the traumatic event, your medical team or GP can direct you to the most appropriate service.

If you have any concerns about your own wellbeing and functioning, you can seek help via your GP.

Helplines and useful resources

Text and telephone helplines for young people
www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/find-help/i-need-urgent-help/

Webchat and telephone helplines for parents
www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/

Useful resources

www.camhs-resources.co.uk

More information on understanding and managing trauma

www.penninecare.nhs.uk/trauma

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Supporting your child following trauma

When your child has been involved in a traumatic event, it can take time for them, and you, to adjust. Trauma affects people in different ways, at different times; there is no right or wrong way to feel. These feelings usually improve with time, and there are many things that parents can do to support their child's recovery.

This booklet provides information about how you and your child may expect to feel in the days and months ahead, and what you can do to take care of yourself and your child.

How might my child be feeling after a trauma?

You might notice the following reactions in your child:

- Nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping
- Getting angry or upset more easily
- Finding it hard to be separated from loved ones
- Repetitive play or drawing about the event
- Feeling anxious, jumpy and on edge
- Physical complaints (e.g. stomach ache, headache, dizziness, heart racing)
- Feeling scared to go out
- Difficulty concentrating
- Seeming younger than they did before (e.g. bed-wetting, thumb-sucking)

- Feeling guilty
- Avoiding anything that may remind them of the event
- Not wanting to think or talk about the event
- Memories or pictures of the event unexpectedly popping into their mind
- Feeling as if it is actually happening again
- Problems at school.

You may notice that you also experience some of the above reactions. These reactions are normal following a traumatic event, and are a way of making sense of what happened.

What can I do to support my child?

- **Remind your child that they are safe**
- **Reassure your child** e.g. the event was not their fault, you love them.
- **Maintain or re-establish some normal routine.** This will help your child feel safe.
- **Offer opportunities for them to talk to you when they are ready** e.g. "I am here for you if you would like to discuss what happened, but you don't have to." Talking can help your child make sense of what happened, and prevent them from making up their own version of events.

Some children may find it easier to communicate their experience by drawing or playing.

- **Answer difficult questions as honestly and directly as you can.** It is okay if you do not always know the answer.
- **Normalise and validate strong emotions** e.g. "it is okay to feel sad. It is normal for people to feel sad after something scary has happened."
- **Label your child's different feelings** e.g. "I can see you're worried."
- **Allow yourself to show your own emotions and label these for your child.**
- **Show that you can tolerate your child's distress.** Children often avoid talking about traumas for fear of upsetting family members.
- **Remind your child that the trauma is in the past.** Help them focus on something good they have done since the event, or something they are looking forward to.
- **Give your child a sense of control** e.g. allowing them to choose between two sandwich fillings at lunch.
- **Help your child socialise and relax.** Encourage them to seek out friends, pursue hobbies and other activities that bring them pleasure.